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(EDS) Muslim Voices

Community and the Self in South Asia

Civilization and Modernity: Narrating the Creation of Pakistan

David Gilmartin

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Author's Note

All of these articles have been published previously, though some have been slightly revised. Revisions on most of them consist simply of correcting existing mistakes, standardizing some spellings and transliteration, or bringing the occasional footnote up-to-date (as, when a previously unpublished work has not been published). In the case of two essays, the first and the fourth, revisions have been slightly more substantial, largely in order to limit the degree of overlapping material in the two, which was initially substantial. They still contain some common material, but less than previously.

1. 'Customary Law and Shari'at in British Punjab,' in Katherine Ewing, ed., *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 43–62.
2. 'Biraderi and Bureaucracy: The Politics of Muslim Kinship Solidarity in 20th Century Punjab,' *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January–June 1994), pp. 1–29.
3. 'Shrines, Succession and Sources of Moral Authority,' in Barbara D. Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 221–40.
4. 'Kinship, Women and Politics in 20th Century Punjab,' in Gail Minault, ed., *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1981), pp. 251–73.
5. 'Democracy, Nationalism and the Public: A Speculation on Colonial Muslim Politics,' *South Asia*, vol. 14, no. 1 (June 1991), pp. 123–40.
6. 'The Shahidganj Mosque Incident: A Prelude to Pakistan,' in Ira M. Lapidus and Edmund Burke III, eds, *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 146–68.

7. “‘Divine Displeasure’ and Muslim Elections: The Shaping of Community in Twentieth-Century Punjab,’ in D.A. Low, ed., *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 106–29.
8. ‘Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab,’ *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3 (July 1979), pp. 485–517.
9. ‘A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 40, no. 3 (July 1998), pp. 415–36.
10. ‘A Networked Civilization?’ in Bruce Lawrence and Miriam Cooke, eds, *Muslim Networks: From Hajj to Hip Hop* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 51–68.
11. ‘Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,’ *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4 (November 1998), pp. 1068–95.

Introduction

The Pakistan movement should not be considered “Islamic”: it was a movement for a secular, liberal democracy, although once the country was established there certainly were voices that sought to create an Islamically ordered state.

—Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations*, p. 1

Pakistan ka matlab kya?
La Ilaha ila'allah
[What is Pakistan's meaning?
There is no god but God]

—Popular pro-Pakistan slogan

Sixty-some years after its emergence as an independent nation, controversy over the meaning and causes of the creation of Pakistan remains vibrant.¹ Part of the controversy lies in conflicting interpretations of what happened in the run-up to the partition of India in 1947. What did Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League really want when they raised the slogan of ‘Pakistan’? What did Jinnah’s ‘two-nation theory’ really signify? What did Jinnah’s supporters—and those who opposed him—really understand ‘Pakistan’ to mean? And who was responsible, in the aftermath of the complex negotiations that led to the partition plan of 1947, for the shape of the territorial Pakistan that actually emerged? In spite of the long stream of memoirs and analyses by the participants in the events of 1947, and the spate of scholarly studies that have since examined and re-examined the history of partition—and the horrific violence

¹ I want to thank Sandria Freitag and Humeira Iqtidar for reading an earlier draft of this introduction and offering many critical suggestions. Thanks also to graduate students Zaheer Abbas, Aseem Hasnain, Leslie Hempson, and Kapil Vasudev for reading and helpfully commenting on the essay.

that preceded and followed it—such questions continue to inspire significant historical debate.

For all the vibrancy of ongoing historical debates about 1947, historical interpretation of partition remains hampered by serious conceptual difficulties. Part of this arises from the fact that historical interpretations of what happened in 1947 continue to be deeply politicized. In both Pakistan and India, interpretations of 1947 are critical to the development of historical narratives that have resonance for debates on national identity in the present. Nowhere has this been clearer than in the ongoing debates about Jinnah's vision of Pakistan—and whether he envisioned a 'religious' state. Struggles for Jinnah's mantle have, of course, marked Pakistan's politics for decades, with both secular nationalists and supporters of an Islamic state claiming him as their own. In India too, Jinnah remains a figure of historical controversy, a fact nowhere more evident than in the storm of controversy that followed L.K. Advani's assertion in 2005, after laying a wreath at the Quaid-i-Azam's tomb in Karachi, that Jinnah was at root nothing but a 'secular' nationalist—a comment that, remarkably, suggested how the historical interpretation of Pakistan's creation still held powerful implications in the struggle for India's own identity.

It is little wonder in these circumstances that any consensus among scholars on the historical meaning of Pakistan's creation remains elusive. Yet politics alone hardly explains all the conceptual difficulties in the construction of narratives of partition. The politicization of narratives of 'national origin' is certainly not a phenomenon peculiar to India and Pakistan. Rather, the particular problems historians have faced in interpreting the creation of Pakistan and the interpretation of India's partition is more deeply rooted and lies in the problematic relationship between two of the key terms of modern historical analysis that have come together in the interpretation of partition: 'religion' and 'nation'. The interpretation of these terms goes to the heart of historical writing on the emergence of Pakistan, a 'national' state, seemingly defined on the basis of 'religious' identity. And yet, histories of the creation of Pakistan have found it hard to escape from the powerful hold that these terms continue to exercise in the historical imagining of the grand narratives of modern world history—and the tensions inherent in interpreting Pakistan's creation within this narrative.

Discussions about the creation of Pakistan have in fact been shadowed by the assumption that the *supersession* of ‘religion’ by ‘nationalism’—as a legitimizing foundation for sovereign state authority—was one of the key defining and normalizing features marking the emergence of the modern world. This is clear, for example, in Benedict Anderson’s compelling narrative of the rise of modern nationalism. In Anderson’s account, ‘nationalism’ is a quintessentially modern phenomenon, rooted in the triumph of ‘scientific’ conceptions of time and place over older forms of sacred time and place—producing, in the process, inescapably new forms of ‘imagined community’. Though Anderson recognizes clearly the ways in which religious forms of thinking left their mark on newly emerging forms of nationalism, there is nevertheless a clear and inescapable narrative direction to his story of the supersession of religion by nationalism as the dominant frame for community, authority and devotion in the modern world. Nationalism, in this story, developed as an *opposing* and *alternative* form of community consciousness to religion, a fact central to defining its modern significance.²

More than this, along with the rise of nationalism went a transformation in the very nature and meaning of ‘religion’—itself a critical corollary to the narrative of modernity’s coming. The emergence of new forms of ‘imagined community’ in the modern world has been accompanied by the appearance of a concept of ‘religion’ defined normatively by its place in an increasingly internalized and individualized realm. ‘Religion,’ as Anthony Smith writes in describing this transformation, ‘became more and more the expression of private convictions, an inspiration or consolation for the inward crises or joys of an individual’s life, rather than a matter of public concern or communal action.’³ While concepts of religion as an internal compass—and a form of interior conscience—could hardly be said to be entirely new in this narrative, the increasing internalization and individuation of religion and religious experience was a critical element in making space within the grand narrative of modernity for new forms of national community—and, indeed, ultimately, for

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), p. 36.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Renewal in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 96.

concepts of the people's sovereignty defined independently of religion. Changing forms (and meanings) of 'religion' were thus embedded in the very logic of the historical transformations that produced the 'nation'. The narrative of the rise of modern nationalism has carried with it powerful normative expectations about the accompanying evolution of 'religion' (and thus the emergence of new categories for those, seemingly pathological, forms of 'religion,' such as 'fundamentalism,' that have challenged these dominant normative expectations).⁴

The power of such a naturalized vision of religion's role in the making of the modern world hovers over most efforts by recent historians to make sense of the public and political role of religion in the creation in 1947 of Pakistan as a new national state. In fact, scholars have often attempted to traverse this problem by suggesting the limits either in the Pakistan movement's 'nationalism' (a nation 'insufficiently imagined,' in Philip Oldenburg's phrase, or, 'nationalism without a nation,' in Christophe Jaffrelot's evocative title⁵) or in its reliance on 'religion' in the run-up to Pakistan's emergence in 1947. Some historians have tried to explain away the implicit historical incompatibility of religion and modern nationalism in Pakistan's creation by suggesting that it was not 'religion' per se that shaped Pakistan's founding at all, but rather a Muslim 'culture' that was manipulated by Pakistan's elite for their own political purposes. In this sense, for all its apparent religious foundations, Pakistan's formation as a 'nation' cannot be said to have been religious in any meaningful sense; it was rather, as Ayesha Jalal has put it, a case of Islam having been used by Muslim elites for political purposes. 'Contrary to established wisdoms about Pakistan,' Jalal writes, 'the role of Islam in the processes leading up to the partition of India was to amplify and dignify what remained from first to last a political struggle launched by the Muslim League under the secular

⁴ Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

⁵ Philip Oldenburg, "'A Place Insufficiently Imagined': Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (August 1985), pp. 711–33; Christophe Jaffrelot, ed., *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002).

leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah.’⁶ True ‘religion,’ in such arguments, could have little to do with a movement that was defined in its essence by the rise of modern nationalism.

For some the Pakistan movement was in fact *neither* nationalist *nor* religious. Perhaps the most powerful exponent of such a view of the Pakistan movement was Jawaharlal Nehru. For Nehru of course, as *The Discovery of India* made clear, the growth of nationalism was critical to the trajectory of modern Indian history, shepherding India into a progressive place within the narrative of the modern world. But religious communalism, which lay behind the movement for Pakistan, was, in Nehru’s view, an aberration within this narrative, a distortion of both ‘religion’ and ‘nationalism’. And for Nehru this had a clear cause: the history of colonialism. Rather than becoming a compass for individual morality in a world defined by science and rationalism, religion had been turned by the structure of British colonialism into a political force fundamentally at odds with the narrative of the modern world.⁷ It was thus, in fact, the paradoxical place of the structure of colonialism itself in the narrative of modern history that best explained the seemingly unnatural relationship between ‘nationalism’ and ‘religion’ that colonialism had engendered, and that found expression in the demand for a separate Muslim Pakistan.

Most recent academic historians have steered clear of Nehru’s modernist triumphalism, much less of a view of Pakistan as a modernist pathology. While recognizing the importance of the structure of colonialism to Pakistan’s story, many have seen the development of new trends in the role of religion during the colonial period as evidence of creative adaptations to the new structures and

⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 277.

⁷ For a discussion of this, see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 240. As Pandey argues, Nehru distinguished communalism strikingly from real nationalism: ‘Real or Indian nationalism’ was ‘quite distinct from religious or communal varieties of nationalism’ and ‘strictly speaking is the only form which can be called nationalism in the modern sense of the word.’ For Nehru’s blaming the British, see Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 385.

pressures brought to India by British rule. Whether focused on an analysis of the thought of particular Muslim thinkers or ideas, on particular groups, or on the social history of religion's changing roles in community definition and competition in the localities, the analysis of colonialism's contradictions has provided a critical framework for the development of fruitful new insights into the changing role of religious community in the political, social and intellectual life of British India.⁸

But many have followed Nehru's lead in seeing the distinctive (and many would say anomalous) juxtaposition of 'nation' and 'religion' that defined Pakistan's creation as rooted in the paradoxical place of colonialism in the great story of modern history. After all, colonialism *did* draw India inescapably into modernity's grand narrative. This is the burden of Benedict Anderson's emphasis on 'census, map, and museum' as elements in a statist colonial world-view that projected a vision of colonized culture as subject to objectified, scientific appropriation and manipulation.⁹ With its links to an international capitalist economy, colonialism laid the foundations for a 'political economy of nationhood,' to use Manu Goswami's phrase, which played a critical role in generating new 'national' visions of time and space reflecting the new scientific conceptions of modern thinking. Though 'colonial state space was a contradictory force-field, shot through with both everyday and spectacular tensions,'

⁸ There are many works that could be cited to here. A few examples are: Sandra B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Gregory Kozłowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹ See also, Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Goswami argues, the process of nationalist territorial imagining was inescapably linked to colonialism's grounding in modern practices.¹⁰

And yet, the history of religion in British India suggests colonialism's profound contradictions when viewed through the lens of such a narrative. On one level, religion in colonial India was undoubtedly subject to many of the same new conceptions of space, time and community that shaped the emergence of nationalism. Under the influence of the census and other administrative instruments of objectification (and what some historians have called a 'colonial sociology of knowledge'), religion was turned into an identity imagined as adhering, like national identity, in each individual, an identity that could be imagined as abstracted from the relational frameworks of status and hierarchy that shaped Indian society. This influenced many religious reform movements, among Hindus and Muslims alike, which sought to infuse new purifying (and homogenizing) moral identities into the new forms of census-defined religious communities in India, often attacking in the process the variant, localized forms of religious practice and community that remained common. Here religious change in India aligned itself, in many cases, with the scripturalizing and interiorizing processes often associated by historians with broader narratives of modernity worldwide. As Clifford Geertz argued in *Islam Observed*, the effect of colonialism more broadly was to turn scripturalizing forms of self-conscious reformist religion against the distinctive religious practices that defined each region's historically grounded cultural ethos.¹¹ Structures of religious community linked to status hierarchies and cultural mediators gave way to a conception of imagined community in which the religious commitment of each individual, regardless of social status, was what theoretically mattered.

But at the same time, the peculiar relationship between society and state under colonialism defined, on another level, *apolitical* role for religion that was seemingly at odds with this trajectory of religious reform. Standing in sharp contrast to this trend was a structure of state legitimization under colonialism that sought to portray the colonial state

¹⁰ See Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 9.

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

as a rationalizing presence standing outside, and bringing order to, a fundamentally pre-modern society, defined precisely by its religious ‘traditionalism’.

This was a ‘traditionalism’ that defined the fundamental *difference* between Indian society and the rationalizing modernity embodied by the colonial state. Even as the structure of colonialism thus encouraged in critical ways a range of reformist religious movements deeply influenced by larger, world-wide currents of change, religious ‘communities’ tended to be seen officially, at the same time, as emblematic of Indian society’s defining particularisms, which distanced individual Indians from participation in the larger, universal narrative of modernity. Framed by such contradictory developments, ‘religion’ took on starkly contradictory meanings. While serving for many as a vehicle for interior adaptation to change, it also served, both in official thinking and in official structures, as a vehicle for encompassing what was viewed as India’s fixed and unchanging (nonmodern) religious essence. Significantly, this essence became officially embodied, for example, in community-defining structures of text-based, state-administered religious law and in the establishment of separate electorates for political representation. It is little wonder, in these circumstances, that Nehru saw attempts to adapt modern ‘nationalism’ to such structures of religious community and identity as a contradiction in terms, and in deep tension with the normative construction of modernity.

Civilization and Modernity

There is no doubt that the history of religion in modern South Asia can thus be read as a marker of the contradictory structure of colonialism. Yet I would argue that if we are to make sense of Pakistan’s emergence as a new state drawing *both* on the languages of nationalism *and* of religious community, we must free the terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘religion’ from narrow definitions that are *wholly* embedded within the normative assumptions of modernity’s grand narrative. This is not to say that the narrative of Pakistan’s creation can (or should) be wrenched out of larger historical framings that link it to world historical narratives. It is rather to argue that the meanings of these terms have their roots in a much older history than the coming of ‘modernity’ to India (even in its colonial guise)—and

that is the history of the struggle to define identity within the ambit of large, cosmopolitan moral frameworks. To understand the relationship between nation and religion in the run up to Pakistan's emergence, it is critical to see these terms not simply as defining fixed forms of identity already embedded (and in potential competition) within an objectifying scientific framework of modernity, but rather to see them in their historical relationship to the *processes* through which South Asians—in all their local, regional, cultural, genealogical and status-based hierarchies and particularisms—have long negotiated the ways local identities operated within the frameworks of larger moral and civilizational structures, whether they be Indic/Islamicate or modern/scientific. Indeed, it is only in seeing 'modernity' as itself embedded in a longer civilizational history that we can begin to make sense of many of the apparent contradictions in the history of Pakistan's creation.

The term 'civilization', as a concept for analysis, has come into disfavor in recent years in response to overheated visions of 'clashing' civilizations within a frame of contemporary geopolitics.¹² During the colonial period the term was often used simply as a marker of the colonizers' claims to moral superiority, a superiority defined by their 'civilizing mission' (the bringing of a supposed universal modernity, often in a Christian guise) to the colonized world. At the same time, 'civilization' as a term for the cultural achievements of the non-European world was widely recognized, yet relegated by orientalizing Europeans during the colonial period to a distant, and now superceded, past. And the emphasis on scientific, objectifying knowledge that was a hallmark of modernity's intellectual foundations was often projected by its proponents as an unbridgeable break with this civilizational past.

Yet, at the same time, the structure of 'modernity' shared much in its South Asian context with civilizations that had preceded it, both Indic and Islamic. As a frame for analysis, the term 'civilization' suggests the centrality of structured tensions between core and periphery, not simply in a geographic sense, but as defined by the relationship between a moral and intellectual center shaping core understandings of humanity's place in the cosmos, and the

¹² No work has been more responsible for this than Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

particularities of mundane universalizing ideals at civilization's core subsumed the particularities of culture and power, even as these particularities dictated, often independently of core ideals, the dynamics of local politics and local life. In this sense, civilizations were never wholly bounded, either spatially or temporally, for, as Marshall Hodgson argues, they were never reified entities or identities, but rather defined by ideals projected by dominant literate elites. 'Each civilization,' as Marshall Hodgson put it, 'defines its own scope, just as does each religion.'¹³

But civilizational ideals were also, most critically for us here, not simply projections of elites, but ideals shaping the ongoing—and never fully reconciled—tensions between shared ideals and the plenitude of everyday cultural difference encompassed within them, tensions visible not only in the relations between centers of power and their fringes, but within the variegated structures of both elite and non-elite life. If civilizational ideals thus defined unifying frames, their structural and intellectual dynamics were also inescapably marked by the tensions between ideals and worldliness, between core and periphery, between state and society, between legitimation and the messy operation of power, and also, critically importantly, by the tensions defining the struggle for the construction of a 'civilized' self. Rather than objectified (or even 'objectifiable') entities, civilizations were in this sense patterns of tensions imagined as operating in parallel ways to define multiple levels of reality, from the cosmos, to humanity, to the community, to the self. To study civilizations, therefore, is not just to study the ideals that define them, but to study how moral ideals operate in relation to—and in tension with—the organizing structures of life and power at all levels.

Modernity has sometimes been seen as challenging such a vision of 'civilization' precisely because it was based on the triumph of a homogenizing 'scientific' worldview, and on a concomitant view of autonomous personhood and 'objectified' societies and identities. But, as the tensions within the narrative of the Pakistan movement suggest, the operation of modernity 'in the world' could hardly escape the

¹³ *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. I, p. 33. My view of 'civilization' is shaped most significantly here by Hodgson's seminal work.

structural framing of civilizational tradition. In this sense, it is the argument here that the central ideals of modernity operated too within templates of reality defined by tensions between core and periphery, between ideals and everyday relationships, which were played out, as in earlier Indic and Islamic civilizations, in parallel ways on multiple levels simultaneously. And in many ways, the ideals and tensions that had defined these earlier civilizational visions became intertwined with modernity's new civilizational tensions.

One can gain some perspective on this by comparing this perspective with that developed by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his book, *Provincializing Europe*. In certain ways, Chakrabarty's concern is the same one being discussed here, that is, to ask how a normative narrative of modernity, always reducing non-European histories to stories of either tardiness or contradiction, could be 'deployed or thought about so that we have at least a glimpse of its finitude, a glimpse of what might constitute an outside to it.'¹⁴ This is an agenda critical for rethinking Pakistan's narrative. But in searching for this, he tends to contrast the vision of modernizing historicism with 'subaltern pasts,' ignoring the far more complex frameworks (lost in a formulation such as 'subaltern pasts') within which earlier civilizational frameworks have left their residues, always at the hinge between universal ideals and the inescapable facts of cultural difference and daily life.¹⁵ He thus speaks of a 'hyperreal Europe' as 'the center toward which all historical imagination gravitates,'¹⁶ but without asking how this might be compared with a 'hyperreal Arabia' within a frame of Muslim civilization, or perhaps a 'hyperreal Bharatvarsha' in Indic civilization. The problem is that, although the comprehensive assumptions of science and historicism are undoubtedly new, and shape the universalizing narratives Chakrabarty critiques, the basic structural problem that Chakrabarty addresses, that

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007 edition), p. 93.

¹⁵ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 100–13. In fact, though Chakrabarty tends to ignore this in his theoretical discussion, such 'residues' play an important role in his more concrete, and very original, cultural analysis of the modern history of the Bengali *bhadralok*.

¹⁶ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 45.

is, the tensions between universality and difference, is in fact quite old. And it is this very fact that provides a structural framework for us to step outside modernity and see it replicating a pattern of tensions that is far older and broader than modernity itself.¹⁷

It is the argument here, then, that the story of Pakistan provides an important opportunity for us to see this. It is only by seeing modernity as *both* a new vision emanating from Europe *and* a vision building on older civilizational structures not peculiar to Europe, that we can begin to find a new narrative line for Pakistan's story. This is not to deny the often complex historical imaginings of civilizational centers that shaped precolonial India (and 'Islamic civilization' itself, as in the relationship in Mughal India between an imagined sacred center at Makkah and a fount of civilizational culture—and political power—associated with a center in Persia and the Persian language).¹⁸ Nor is it

¹⁷ From this perspective, there is in fact a deep tension in Chakrabarty's title itself, which is important to note in framing modernity as a civilization. On one level, his book is a critique of the universalizing pretensions of Europe's modernity, contending that these were in fact embedded in the 'very particular intellectual and historical traditions' of Europe (p. xiii). Implicit in this is a critique of modernity as indeed locked in a civilizational structure (captured in the word 'provincializing' in his title), with Europe as a center, in which universal ideals (though in theory applicable to all), can in practice never be fully reached by the periphery (for the very reason that civilization involves a hierarchy, a separation between center and periphery as a basic model of reality). In this sense, his call to 'provincialize Europe' is a call to truly realize modernity's universalism (and implicit egalitarianism) by moving beyond this civilizational structure—that is, to fulfill modernity's homogenizing promise of a culture equally open to all, without a 'center' or 'provinces'. Yet on another level, his book is precisely a critique of such a vision, a recognition of the inescapable tension between universality and particularity. The attempt to undertake these agendas simultaneously is in fact one of the book's strengths, though the contradictory character of these agendas is never fully addressed or delineated.

¹⁸ Some sense of this tension is evident in Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). It is worth recalling in this regard Marshall Hodgson's comment that it was only after the establishment of an Islamic imperial center in Iraq and the rooting of Islam in the core areas of Persian civilization under the Abbasids that we can speak of a 'fullfledged Islamic civilization' in the years after 750. Marshall Hodgson, 'The Unity of Later Islamic History,' reprinted in

to deny the complexities in analyzing how the residues of civilizational structures remain as new visions of universal principles layered onto one another. Yet such an analysis is critical, I would argue, to the dynamics of the Pakistan story. On one level, the story of modernity is precisely a story, as we have seen in common narratives of the Pakistan movement, about how universals within previous civilizational frames were transformed into particularities within the new universalizing frame of modernity—hence the attempted colonial transformation of ‘religions’ (including ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Islam’) into bounded entities, separated from and juxtaposed against one another, knowable through objectifying (‘modern’) social and historical analysis. This was a particularized view of ‘religion’ (and ‘religious community’) embedded in a larger scientific world-view, and it was one attractive to many Indian elites as an aspiration, precisely because it drew them toward the structures of power defining the ‘modern’ colonial state (and, for many, toward the magnetic, scientific core of civilizational modernity in Europe). Yet, this definition of religion was also inescapably intertwined with older visions of religion as itself a universalizable object of desire, configured in opposition to, and yet also deeply embedded in, the cultural particularities of everyday life. Such meanings, as Chakrabarty notes, ‘shadowed and supplemented what came from Europe.’¹⁹ Even as ‘religion’ operated within the colonial framework as an objectified (and thus potentially divisive) particularism, it also operated at the same time as an opening to the universal, resonating with the universal ideas of earlier civilizational orders.²⁰

Such a frame provides critical perspectives on the relationship between ‘religion’ and the ‘nation,’ which, as we have seen, has stalked narratives of Pakistan’s creation. As Benedict Anderson makes

Marshall Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, edited by Edmund Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 179.

¹⁹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 129.

²⁰ Some perspective on religion as a category referencing the universal, but always (and inevitably) grounded in particular power structures can be found in Talal Asad, ‘The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,’ in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 27–54.

clear, nationalism was an expression of participation in *both* a universal modern, scientific narrative *and* in the irreducible cultural particularity defining a distinctive people and history. This was a critical tension of modernity itself. Yet it also brought the story of nationalism into inescapable dialogue with the tensions between the universal and the particular long marking the definition of ‘religion’ within Islamic civilizational history as well.

If ‘civilizations’ are large concepts, the traces of their defining tensions are best read in local and particular contexts. The particular locality for the present volume is colonial Punjab, whose distinctive characteristics are the starting point of the analysis. The chapters do not lay out a unified argument about the coming of Pakistan, or a comprehensive picture of colonial Punjab. Nor are all of them explicitly organized around the argument stressing the interaction between concepts of modernity and of civilization that is the focus of this introductory essay. But this Introduction builds on the approaches of the following chapters and is an attempt to pull together and make explicit an underlying framework that is implicit in the book itself. It is an effort influenced, as the footnotes indicate, by much that has been published since the articles themselves were originally written, to build on the assumption that unites the chapters, namely, that it is only by beginning our analysis with the structure of local and regional politics—and the often conflicted connections of such politics to civilizational ideals—that we can begin to make sense of the crosscurrents that shaped Pakistan’s emergence.

Colonialism, Biradari, and Islam in the Punjab

The first set of chapters deals with the key particularities that defined Punjab as a region in the decades before partition. Punjab was of course itself a complex and varied setting. But the chapters begin with the assumption that it was lineage-based kinship structures that shaped much that was distinctive in Punjab’s local politics and culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. These kinship structures were central to the distinct particularities of Punjab’s politics, and they were embedded in the region’s long history of migration, pastoralism,

agriculture, tribalism, and political upheaval. They encompassed Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike. Accounts of Pakistan's creation rarely begin with the region's structure of *biradari* ('brotherhood' of extended kin), for this structure has rarely been seen as central to the narrative of Pakistan's coming. Yet, it is the argument here that the politics of *biradari* identity is a critical site for understanding the intersection of modern and Islamic civilizational tensions in shaping the long-term narrative of partition.

Whatever its local Punjabi roots, for many Punjabi Muslims, the meaning of *biradari* as an ordering principle of social life was shaped by the longstanding and central role of genealogy in molding conceptions of Islamic civilizational order. As a structure of tensions, Islamic civilization was of course constituted, as many have noted, by conquest, trade, travel and the circulation of ideas—and by the power of Islam's exemplary core models. But it was also constituted by the institutional frames that defined the Islamicate world's ongoing localism and diversity, even within a framework that recognized the moral power of a civilizational center. Lineage politics defined simultaneously the distinctiveness (and particularity) of every separate lineage (and the place of every individual within a lineage), even as a genealogical imaginary also defined a framework linking the peripheries of the Islamicate world to the civilizational center associated with the Prophet and the pristine era of early Islam.²¹ Yet if

²¹ For a recent discussion of the power of a genealogical imaginary in ordering the ecumenical and the local, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Claims to status in Punjab were commonly linked—whether for Sayyids, Qureshis, Pathans, or Arains—to genealogical connections to early Islamic civilization, and to a genealogical framework that in some ways encompassed Punjabi society (or at least encompassed the politically salient Muslim elite). Not all Muslims asserted such genealogical connections to early Islam, but even many Muslims who asserted status identities clearly rooted in Indic civilization (such as Muslim Rajputs), often defined genealogical connections to founding ancestors who had converted at the hands of well-known sufi saints, such as Baba Farid (whose authority, of course, had its own Islamic genealogical referents). See, for example, Richard M. Eaton, 'The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid,' in Barbara D. Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

this genealogical imagination linked local politics to the larger history of Islam, it also suggested the defining tensions inherent in Islamic civilization between the ideals embodied by the exemplars of early Islam and the local pressures that defined the distinctive particularisms of Punjabi society, which crossed religious boundaries. As the role of genealogy attests, civilization was constituted not just by the links between local community and core ideals, but also by the inescapable (and in some ways irresolvable) *tensions* that defined the relationship between these.

Perhaps the clearest window on how such tensions intersected with the new frames of colonialism and modernity is provided by an analysis of the structuring of colonial law, which is the subject of the first chapter. The key to this was the British emphasis on procedural rationalism as an encompassing framework for defining distinctive systems of substantive indigenous law. In much of India, this focused on the incorporation into British legal procedures of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ law, encapsulated as systems of particularized, substantive law within the framework of a modern procedural universalism.²² Here we can see legal echoes of the process of objectification that, in other realms also, turned ‘religions’ into opposing, particularized entities.

But the implications of this for Punjabi Muslims—and its relationship to the tensions of Islamic civilization—were suggested by the attempt in Punjab to draw a sharp line also between ‘religious law’ (whether Hindu or Muslim) and law based on ‘custom’. The establishment in Punjab of a distinctive system of ‘customary law’ was driven by British concerns to seize hold of Punjab’s genealogically

1984), pp. 333–56. One might also stress the importance of a genealogical model in structuring Islamic civilization still further, as one could argue that even the historical development of Islamic law, with its emphasis on *hadith* and on the *isnad*, was strongly influenced by a genealogical model. In this sense, genealogy can be seen as a strong incorporative principle within Islamic civilization, framing the connections between center and periphery, between unity and difference, in some ways similar to (though in other ways, of course, different from) the role of objectifying science in the constitution of “modernity.”

²² For a larger discussion of the British Indian legal system in this context, see Jonathan Ocko and David Gilmartin, “State, Sovereignty, and the People: A Comparison of the ‘Rule of Law’ in China and India,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 68, no. 1 (February 2009), pp. 55–100.

based *biradari* structure, with its local ‘tribal customs,’ for political purposes. But the effect was not only to underscore the particularism of *both* ‘customary law’ and *shariat* within the universalizing procedural authority of modernity, but also to starkly separate them, in the process challenging the complex civilizational relationship between *shariat*, long popularly understood as a universalizing morality (linking local life to the era of the Prophet), and the particularism of everyday custom and social relations.

Tension between ‘custom’ and ‘*shariat*’ was in fact an old phenomenon in Punjab, evident both in popular stories and in the language of religious reformers. For many, as Muzaffar Alam puts it, the *shariat* had long been ‘more a set of moral ideals manifested in the life of the Prophet than a mere system of law.’²³ Religious law had thus long been in tension with lived reality.²⁴ Yet such conflict had never been absolute, and was part of the larger structure of cultural tensions—and connections—linking local life with (and juxtaposing it against) a perceived civilizational core. Old tensions thus took on entirely new meanings within the new legal structures of the British. The juxtaposition of ‘customary law’ and *shariat* as opposing systems critically shaped debates in the 1920s and 1930s on the meaning of ‘Muslim community,’ framing such debates for many in terms of a deep moral tension between the ‘customs’ of local life and commitment to a ‘moral community’ defined by *shariat*. But if these debates were unquestionably shaped by colonialism’s new legal

²³ Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800*, p. 152.

²⁴ The intersection between *biradari* (or *zat*) and religious sensibility in 19th-century Punjab has been recently discussed by Farina Mir. Islam and *zat* were deeply intertwined, even as true religious commitment and devotion were often configured in opposition to the worldly structures of *biradari* relations and rote adherence to religious authority and religious rules. One can see this, for example, in attitudes toward the mullah in popular Punjabi stories such as *Hir Ranjha*. See Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming). See also Christopher Shackle, ‘Beyond Turk and Hindu: Crossing the Boundaries in Indo-Persian Romance,’ in David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence, eds, *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 55–73.

orderings, their meanings were also deeply embedded in older Islamic civilizational structurings, which explains *both* the moral intensity *and* the deep uneasiness that such debates engendered among Punjabi Muslims.²⁵

Indeed, tensions surrounding the role of *biradari* in the administrative politics of colonial Punjab highlighted the ambiguous role of local genealogical and political identities in the structure of colonial rule more generally. Such tensions are the focus of the second chapter. Whatever the important roles of *biradari* (and genealogy) in the modern systematizations of colonial policy, *biradari* remained a category of local association inescapably rooted also in the particularity—and fluidity—of the local social and political transactions and reciprocities that defined leadership and power in the localities. If *biradari* provided a critical framework for political adaptation to the rationalized bureaucratic structures of British rule (including, ultimately, the new structures of colonial elections introduced by the British after 1919, as the rise of the Unionist Party in Punjabi politics in the 1920s and 1930s made clear),²⁶ it provided also a framework for political action that, in its very social groundedness, could never be *fully* assimilated by structures of colonial objectification, including those based on religion. At the same time, *biradari*'s increasing encapsulation within the British system led to new pressures for the formal articulation of 'tribal' histories linking *biradaris* genealogically to early Islam. It is from this perspective that the politics of *biradari* provides a key vantage point from which to observe the contested intersections of modernity and

²⁵ For discussion of how the practice of 'custom' survived attempts to institute *shariat* after 1947, see Matthew Nelson, *In the Shadow of Shari'ah: Islam, Islamic Law, and Democracy in Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

²⁶ The Unionist Party was a landlord-dominated party whose organization crossed the boundaries of religion, and which came for a time to dominate Punjab's electoral arenas. Critical to its emergence as a political party was its linking of *biradari*-based politics to the political definition of class interests based on property rights, and to the mobilization of rural vs. urban and debtor vs. creditor. Its history in fact suggests *biradari*'s critical importance to the particular form of Punjab's adaptation to a modern, capitalist-inflected language of political competition in the first half of the 20th century.

Islamic civilization as frames for defining the charged place of local politics in larger moral orderings.

This framework of tensions was also evident in the colonial history of sufism, the dominant form of Islamic organization in the Punjab in this period, which is the focus of the third chapter. Sufis drew their influence from perceived closeness to God and from their positioning within the networks of connection that had long crossed the Islamicate world. Sufi shrines and sufi stories also provided glimpses of the power of sufi devotion in linking even local life to an Islamic center (and to God). Yet sufi shrines were at the same time embodiments of the local and, through genealogies of inherited *barakat* and stories of power and devotion, links to an exemplary civilizational past. They were thus, in a sense, manifestations of the defining tensions of Islamic civilization, a critical fact for understanding their central role as a barometer of the cultural impact of colonialism.

As in the case of customary law, colonial rule in some ways challenged this structure, but colonial rule's significance lay less in a direct challenge to sufism than in the ways it reconfigured these old tensions in response to the new tensions of civilizational modernity. British administration in some respects powerfully reinforced the localism of sufi authority, incorporating sufi shrines—and their hereditary custodians (*sajjada nishins*)—into structures of administration that drew on the legitimizing foundations of local lineage organization, genealogical hierarchy, and modern systematizing authority. At the same time, British power also distanced sufi shrines from their symbolic genealogical connections to early Islam—and from a charismatic Islamic center—by framing their authority largely in terms of property and local influence, rather than in terms of the transmission of *barakat*.²⁷ No framework was more powerful in doing this than that of colonial property law, which, as this chapter suggests, mediated questions of succession, often through reference to local 'custom'. It is little surprise in this context that colonial policies spurred an escalating critique of hereditary sufis from religious reformers in British Punjab—a critique (with roots in Islam's

²⁷ For a discussion of the ways that the British tried to separate the authority of contemporary sufis from their historical civilizational authority, see Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

own civilizational tensions) that included a demand for individual sufi piety (and thus for education and the individual internalization of core Islamic values) as a supplement to the legitimacy provided by genealogy. Here again, we can see the new tensions generated by colonial orderings, but also the important degree to which these tensions can only be understood in relationship to the longstanding tensions defining Islamic civilization.

The final chapter in this section looks to one important debate—that on the status and inheritance rights of women—as a key marker of the intersection of modernity and Islam as civilizational structures. It should come as no surprise, of course, that gender issues should influence the delineation of new visions of community in the contemporary era, as this was common in Europe and in many parts of the colonial world during this era. Gender categories represented an opening to the universal, even as they grounded politics in the particularities of kinship structure. For the British, gender was thus in some ways central to the negotiations surrounding the adaptation of a vision of civilizational modernity to the structure of *biradari* (and the role of genealogy) in the Punjab. It was through a gender-based *theory* of ‘tribal’ patriarchy (an artifact of British rationalism and intellectual modernity) that the British constructed a usable vision of Punjabi ‘society’ (and of customary law), even in the face of the local diversity they encountered. But if this vision of ‘society’ was defined by the normative subordination of women, it was also in tension with the colonizers’ own narratives of progress, in which an improving status for women was itself a key marker of modern ‘civilization’.²⁸ It was this tension that left an opening for some Muslim reformers to appeal to the *shariat* as an expression of an *Islamic* civilizational morality—which guaranteed women shares in landed inheritance—as a critique of the civilizational foundations of British rule.²⁹ Yet paradoxically, in calling attention to these tensions, reformers also underscored the

²⁸ For a sense of the historical play of this tension, see, for example, Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁹ There is a growing literature on the intersection of gender and critiques of the British. For an important perspective on this, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

longstanding tensions in Islamic civilization itself that the British separation of *shariat* from ‘customary law’ had only underscored and heightened. Such debates suggested, in fact, the critical ways that debates on the status of women became a central ground for the negotiation of the intersecting tensions of Islamic and modern civilizations—a development that was to have long-term significance for women’s roles in the later struggles to define national identity in Pakistan.³⁰

Religion and the Public Sphere

If the chapters in the first section suggest the enduring significance of patterns of longstanding civilizational tensions in shaping the politics of Punjab, even as these were subsumed within structures of colonialism, the essays in the second section focus on the critical importance of an emerging ‘public sphere’ of market-driven publication, debate, and political action in the late 19th and 20th centuries, in shaping how these tensions played out. The ‘public sphere’ was, in fact, the central venue in which core values of modernity were projected in Punjab, and it was there that Punjabis gained their most direct glimpse of the idealized images of personal freedom and individual autonomy that lay at the core of the image of modernity as a civilizational structure. Even in the face of institutions of colonial domination, newspapers, pamphlets, and public meetings/protests provided new arenas for the imagining of individual agency as a key element in the constitution of the bonds holding Muslims together—and driving them apart—within new, worldwide structures of power. It was in this arena that issues already discussed, relating to the law, *biradari*, sufism, property, economics, politics, women, and much more, were openly debated. As Benedict Anderson has argued, it was the very structure of this sphere (whatever its significant limitations in a largely illiterate society) that framed a new vision of the relationship between the individual and community, a vision defined not by received authority, status or cultural mediation,

³⁰ For a discussion of reformist debate on the women’s issue, and the role of women within it, see Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women’s Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

but by an image of autonomous individuals (readers/observers/actors) committing their ‘hearts and minds’ to a new vision of collectivity.

Yet it is here that we can also see most clearly the civilizational tensions marking the structure of modernity itself, for this core vision of autonomy was one that could only be partially glimpsed in this context (much as Islamic core models—associated both with Prophetic and Persianate tradition—were only partially glimpsed at sufi shrines). The structure of Punjab’s new public sphere remained in pervasive tension with the realities of the forms of domination (including both local power structures and state structures of scientific categorization) that marked India’s colonial rule and everyday life—and that in practice significantly constrained even the public sphere itself. Such tensions shaped, in fact, the emergence in public debate of multiple conceptions of ‘religion,’ at times conceptualized as an essentialized and particularized category associated with scientific objectification, at times as the key to freedom and autonomy, associated with an image of internalized authority and universal morality.

This tension is the focus of the first chapter in this section. On one level, the public sphere gave new scope to debate on personal moral reform in Punjab, focusing on the competing efforts of different reforming groups, including various schools of ulama, as they sought to define ‘religion’ in terms of visions of personal self-control, linked to new emphases on internalized, rationalized commitment to scriptural standards, and new notions of personal piety. Indeed, it was in the public realm of print and publication that debates surrounding the principles of *shariat*—and the meaning of Muslim community—gained new momentum. This shaped the growing influence of the Deobandi and Barelvi ulama, and of reforming Muslim elites influenced by Aligarh, in Punjab’s 20th-century politics—and it in some ways aligned old traditions of rational Islamic disputation with the modern image of the abstracted, rationally-constituted individual that lay at the idealized core of modernity.

But such debates were inevitably conducted also against the backdrop of the essentialized colonial categories that lay at the heart of colonial power (which were also a product of modernity). The very structuring of rational debates around the category of ‘Muslim community’ imprisoned such rationalizing debates, at least in their political dimensions, within the colonial particularization of ‘religion’. Considerable argument in the new public sphere thus focused on rights

and safeguards for the ‘Muslim community’ as defined by the fixed census definitions of the colonial state—and by competition in terms of safeguards, representation, and government jobs between ‘Hindus,’ ‘Muslims,’ and ‘Sikhs’ (categories put in quotes here to signify their colonized contextual framing). If the public sphere thus emerged as an arena in which Muslims could catch a glimpse of the universal ideal of individual autonomy, rationalism, and freedom at the purported heart of modern civilization, the structure of debate in the public sphere dramatized, at the same time, the ongoing—and inescapable—power of colonial modernity’s scientific orderings of identity to particularize Muslim identity and to cut individual Muslims—as Muslims—off from direct, political participation in modern civilization’s supposed universalism.

It was in the context of this tension, as this chapter also suggests, that the mobilization of Islamic symbols (and images of Islamic civilization) in public life took on new and critical meanings for the politics of Punjab. For whatever the contours of identity defined within the framework of colonialism’s scientific orderings—or, indeed, of rationalizing reform movements associated with education and the ulama—the new public sphere also offered a realm where individual Muslims could in theory express their autonomy, and their *free* choice of Islamic identities, through *affective* identification with symbols of Islam’s cosmopolitan past and civilizational moral authority—symbols such as the Khilafat, the Prophet, a Mosque (and, indeed, even the *shariat*). The power of such symbols was of course not itself new, but what was new was how these symbols now became the focus for individual devotion and love in the public sphere, devotion now imagined as unmediated by social connections (or particularities), or contained by modernity’s rationalized structures of identity formation. These symbols evoked ‘religion’ not as a particularism embedded in structures of rational ordering or external structures of authority, but as the universalizing core at the center of Islamic civilization imprinted on autonomous individual hearts. Such symbols became the focus for a series of volatile public movements, calling out a community of commitment, action and sacrifice defined by the free, parallel attachment of individual hearts and desires directly to symbolically embodied civilizational ideals. Demonstrative attachment to religious symbols in the public sphere thus linked the image of individual autonomy at the heart of a civilizational vision of

modernity, with the image of a universalizing Islamic identity not imprisoned by modernity's rationalizing colonial identity structures. Such concerns also influenced the thinking, though in a very different register, of Muslim intellectuals such as Muhammad Iqbal.

Here the narrative of modernity provides a critical framework for making sense of Punjab's public politics, but less in terms of a normative narrative template, than in terms of a structure of tensions. In a certain sense, the politics of individual attachment to Islamic symbols in the public sphere represented a counterpoint to the fixed, objectified identities linked to essentializing colonial policy, just as internalized and individualized religious belief (and individual conscience) represented a counterpoint, in the grand normative narrative of modernity, to the fixed identity of the secular 'nation'. In both cases, modernity's magnetic appeal was linked to the mobilization of the idealized image of the individual as free, autonomous actor, conceptually abstracted from socio-political relations. Yet this image (often seen in the normative modern narrative as a hallmark of secularism) came to Punjab embedded in a structure of tensions between ideals and worldly realities that gained meanings as it was layered onto the older tensions between core Islamic civilizational ideals and lived realities long shaping Punjabi life.³¹

³¹ It is important to stress that the argument here is not that these tensions arose primarily from the intersection of modernity with colonial conditions. It is rather that these civilizational tensions were embedded in modern assumptions. Markus Daechsel's comparison of this 'politics of self-expression' (his term for this form of politics) with European fascism is instructive here. While his account downplays the structure of pre-existing civilizational framings in the Punjab in shaping this politics, it suggests the commonalities of this politics with a fascist politics in Europe that similarly configured individual politics as divorced from any sense of grounding in social structure (or in 'society'). This suggests the underlying tensions in this normative vision of modernity even in Europe. See Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression: The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2006), particularly chapter 1. In the context of the larger civilizational structure of modernity, this can perhaps also be related to increasing currency in politics of the concept of the 'people' as a new source of modern legitimacy, a category embracing the often ineffable vision of the autonomous individual as an entity conceptually abstracted from 'society'. For some discussion of how the 'people' were in

It was thus on a template of civilizational tensions that modernity and Islam intersected. In practice, of course, it is little surprise that this politics of symbols played out in Punjab not only against the powerful essentialized visions of religious community that shaped colonial knowledge, but also against the backdrop of the local hierarchies of status and power, including genealogy, that had long defined the civilizational tensions of Punjabi life. The second chapter in this section, focusing on the history of the movement to protect Lahore's Shahidganj mosque in the 1930s, illustrates this. Coming on the heels of powerful public movements focused on protecting the honor of the Quran and the Prophet (such as the 'Rangila Rasul' controversy of the 1920s), the movement to protect the Shahidganj mosque, which had been 'martyred' by Sikhs in 1935 was the most powerful of these movements in colonial Punjab, and it drew on the mosque as a symbol of a transcendent, universalizing morality. It was the very obscurity of this mosque, and its relative unimportance in pre-existing structures of power and society, that now made it powerful as a symbol of personal attachment (and an object of personal commitment and sacrifice). It embodied a vision of community defined not simply by competition between 'Sikh' and 'Muslim' communities as framed by colonial definitions, but by new forms of direct individual attachment to the ineffable core of civilization.³² Yet the very nature of the community

fact configured in opposition to both 'society' and 'state' in the development of electoral institutions and law in colonial India, see David Gilmartin, 'Election Law and the "People" in Colonial and Postcolonial India,' in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Mazumdar, and Andrew Sartori, eds, *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 55–82.

³² The call for public action in the name of civilizational symbols of community of course recalled in some ways the symbolic evocation of community in longstanding cyclic rituals, such as in the annual public commemoration of Husain's martyrdom at Muharram. The importance of this in the definition of community has been highlighted in Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, and it was undoubtedly an ongoing frame in which the civilizational tensions between moral ideals and the corruptions of everyday power were sustained as an ordering model of reality. But the Shahidganj mosque agitation was not merely a cyclic commemoration (however heavily it drew on this framework); rather it

evoked during the agitation—one imagined as constituted by individual freedom, selflessness, desire, and attachment—limited its translation into political action within a colonial political order marked not only by the rationalizing structure of colonial sociology, but also by a powerful structure of property and *biradari*-based status and authority—a structure of everyday social order to which most Muslim leaders remained strongly committed and in which they were deeply enmeshed.

Such contradictions, in fact, became all the more marked in the context of the electoral system introduced in the Punjab by the British in the years after 1920, whose operation is the focus of the last chapter in this section. Indeed, it is the argument here that the structure of elections provided a critical arena for framing the intersection of modern and Islamic civilizational structures that ultimately came to produce Pakistan, largely because elections encapsulated the tensions surrounding the competing meanings of ‘religion’ (and indeed of the ‘nation’) that emerged under colonial rule through the intersection of colonial administration and forms of attachment shaped by the emergence of a public sphere.

In some respects, the very structure of colonial elections—based on separate religious electorates—underscored the political primacy of the rationalized, scientific identity categorizations that had shaped the political meaning of ‘religion’ under colonial authority. Separate electoral constituencies now defined religious community as the political frame within which many of Punjab’s local, more particularized identities, including those shaped by genealogy and *biradari*, could be subsumed. As many scholars have noted, separate electorates were based on a state-defined and territorially demarcated vision of community that politically subsumed all the local differences that in fact shaped everyday politics—a process analogous to the emergence of the modern, modular ‘nation’ in the world at large. Here the fluid worlds of local political competition, based on status, wealth, genealogy and family, were, in a sense, encapsulated within essentialized and bounded structures of identity associated with communal electorates.

mobilized the community through an appeal to individual, political agency in the name of taking concrete political action to protect the mosque.

Yet elections also highlighted, in sharp tension with such an image, the conflicted meanings of 'religion' and religious community that shaped *moral* action within this framework. If separate electorates were defined by fixed, essentialized religious categories, elections were also constructed legally, as this chapter emphasizes, around the primacy of the image of the free, autonomous individual as a core trope of modernity. Even electoral law itself embodied such an image, as it underscored the importance of individual choice as fundamental to the meaning of electoral competition (by outlawing appeals during election campaigns to divine authority that might compromise the autonomy of individual choice). In such a framework, the voice of the community that emerged in the electoral process was shaped not just by the essentialized definitions of communal constituencies, but by the free choice of individuals, driven both by interests and internalized commitments.

Indeed, here we can see the intersection of politically conflicting definitions of the concept of 'religious community' itself. Elections provided a framework (particularly within Punjab's cities) within which free individual identification with symbols of Islam was mobilized at times to challenge the very objectification of religion that had led to the definition of separate electorates. Candidates in urban (and a few rural) constituencies competed against each other on the basis not only of their interests, but also of their commitment to Islamic symbols, sometimes labeling as 'kafirs' those who failed to live up to the idealized standards of personal commitment to Islam that they espoused. Critically, the measure of 'kafir' in this politics was not lack of adherence to *shariat* or other rationalized (and routinized) forms of Islamic behavior, but in lack of *public* action (and sacrifice) in the name of affective attachment to civilizational symbols. That this produced considerable tension in the operation of elections and electoral law is a focus of this chapter, as appeals for free commitment to symbols of Islam shaded easily into coercive appeals in the name of community authority. But most important for the longer term, it was against this backdrop, as this essay also argues, that the idea of Pakistan, a Muslim state, emerged as a kind of focus for reconciliation of these competing conceptions of community: a freely chosen 'nation' defined by commitment to core civilizational symbols, yet a 'nation' grounded as a state within the fixed (and unchosen) boundaries of objectified Muslim identity.

The Coming of Pakistan

The chapters in the third section examine the coming of Pakistan in this larger context, and pinpoint the 1946 elections as the critical moment when the Muslim League and the Pakistan idea first laid claim to the support of a majority of Punjabi Muslims. This was the moment when the Punjab Muslim League succeeded, for the first time, in defeating the dominant, regionally-based Unionist Party and won the majority of Muslim seats in the Punjab Assembly. The outcome of the elections of 1946 illustrates the critical importance for the creation of Pakistan of new institutions associated with modernity (of which elections are a vital example), even as these elections direct our attention to the powerful Islamic civilizational dynamics that provided moral direction to Pakistan's story.

The history of sufism in the Punjab, the subject of the first chapter in this section, provides, of course, a critical vantage point for analyzing this. As we saw earlier, the authority of sufis was deeply embedded in the tension between Islam's exemplary center and the particularisms of local power and life that had marked the structure of Islamic civilization, a fact reflected in the long history of reformist pressures in the development of Indian sufism that took on new significance under the colonial regime. With this history as a backdrop, this chapter describes the critical role of sufis in the 1946 elections, a role shaped by their long-standing position at the hinge of universal ideals and everyday politics. No subject in fact points us more clearly to the civilizational tensions that shaped the coming of Pakistan than this history.

But, as the subsequent chapter shows, it is in an analysis of the distinctive, popular rhetoric of the demand for Pakistan at this time that we can perhaps see most clearly how the moral imperative for a new Muslim nation was rooted in the intersecting tensions of modernity and Islamic civilization. Muslim League support for Pakistan in the 1946 elections undoubtedly drew on certain well-established nationalist tropes (which link it to the development of modern nationalism elsewhere). But the League also played on moral tensions with deep roots in the interactions between the particular and the universal within Islamic civilization. On one hand, Muslim League conceptions of Pakistan (and of the concept of a 'nation') built on the modern, objectified vision of Muslim community that shaped electoral

constituencies, their flat, essentialized census definitions subsuming the local divisions of patronage, land and *biradari* that shaped ongoing political competition—and division—among Punjab's Muslims. Such a vision came to be embodied in the ultimate territorial definition of Pakistan (however problematic the precise relationship between community and territory that Pakistan entailed, a subject discussed in Chapter 11). On the other hand, the *moral* appeal for Pakistan in 1946 was defined in terms of the call for individual Muslims to transcend the divisions of everyday life, including *biradari*, in the name of Pakistan as a higher ideal. The moral appeal for the creation of Pakistan thus rested on a vision of the state not only as a rationalized focus for order and power, but also as a more ineffable symbol of personal attachment to a transcendent civilizational ideal, an ideal associated both with Islamic civilization and with the image of free individual volition linked to the core of modernity. This perspective also suggests the deepseated contradictions in Pakistan's creation. As a state, its claims to legitimacy rested, at least in part, in its moral juxtaposition against the very structures of local power, and claims to essentialized identity, that brought it into existence—a fact that would, arguably, have profound implications for later Pakistani politics (from the eventual—and contested—definition of Ahmadis, Shias, and Christians as internal 'others', to the deep tensions between region and nation that have shaped Pakistan's history).

The last two chapters return, then, to ask how we might frame a Pakistan narrative with these civilizational tensions at its heart. Chapter 10 asks explicitly what a telling of Pakistan's story would look like that focused overtly on the Pakistan movement as an episode in the larger saga of Islamic civilization. Networks of communication and travel—like calculations of genealogy—had long tied the Islamicate world together, incorporating the local hierarchies of power defining Muslim states into the larger frames of Islamic moral ordering that legitimized authority. But as a 'networked civilization,' Islamic civilization (unlike the 'hierarchical' civilization of China) was historically marked by deep tensions between the networked circulation of moral principles and the structures of fixed authority defining Muslim states. Effective political power in the Muslim world had always had worldly roots, often having little to do with Islam. Whatever the networks of culture associated with sufis, ulama and extensive links of trade and travel, most Muslim states were built on

military force and the manipulation of local loyalties and local power. The tensions between effective state authority and the Muslim world's larger, legitimizing civilizational frames, were thus very old—even as they had grown all the more acute in the colonial era. Such tensions, it could be plausibly argued, provided a framework that shaped much in Pakistan's story.

But the particular form that these tensions took in the 20th century was shaped profoundly, as this chapter argues, by colonial structures of governance and by the tensions between ideals and local life that marked modernity itself. The emergence of Pakistan as a nation-state reflected the underlying tension within modernity between the constitution of community by objectified identity formation on the one hand and free individual choice on the other, a tension that in some ways tracked onto older tensions between the worldly pressures of local power/everyday life and the charisma of core Muslim ideals. If the image of 'Pakistan' as a new state thus operated on one level as a symbol of freely-given, individual allegiance to the core of Islamic civilization (thus constituting a new focus for a publically imagined 'national' collectivity), it also gained its power from the colonial realities shaped by '*biradari* and bureaucracy'. Little wonder then that Pakistan, even as its form reflected the new imperatives of the modern nationstate, replicated after its creation many of the same tensions between civilizational legitimacy and worldly power that had marked earlier Muslim states. Chapter 10 thus suggests, if somewhat speculatively, how these tensions may have shaped Pakistan's subsequent history.

Still, as the last chapter emphasizes, Pakistan's history can in no way be seen as bounded entirely by the structures or tensions of Islamic civilization. Chapter 11 thus attempts to ground the narrative of Pakistan in the history of the South Asian encounter with colonialism and modernity more broadly. If community has always been constructed at the intersection of the particular and the universal, then the emergence of *all* of South Asia's new 'national' states in 1947 was, to some degree, marked by similar contradictions in the projection of 'national' conceptions of community. India's history too has been marked by the ongoing negotiation between the 'nation' as a unifying ideal, and the reality of myriad forms of cultural difference. This is a negotiation that has been, inevitably, inflected by visions of India's civilizational history and the tensions within it. The

problematic position of ‘religion’ within India’s political and constitutional structure bears witness to this. In this sense, Pakistan’s story was not unique. The new Indian and Pakistani states were alike (at least as imagined institutions) in being products in 1947 of the intersection between older civilizational frames and the civilization of modernity. From the beginning, they balanced their claims to moral authority within these frameworks with their manipulation of the realities of power that made their creation—and maintenance of control—possible.³³

Chapter 11 also hints at the possible importance of this perspective for understanding the violence surrounding partition, which of course had many causes, but whose roots can be seen in the tensions between the operation of local social order and the larger moral frames that give such order meaning. With nothing less than the moral redefinition of the state at stake in 1947, the civilizational grounding of local systems of power relations (with all the reciprocities they entailed) was thrown into question. Questions about the moral redefinition of the state—and its relationship to society—were hardly laid to rest with the drawing of boundary lines in 1947. Scholars have shown how the redefinition of the relationship between local politics and the authority of the state long remained an ongoing question—which was played out in multiple arenas.³⁴ Certainly, as many of the chapters in this volume suggest, the tensions shaping the run-up to Pakistan’s creation have continued to define tensions in the state’s authority after 1947, both in relationship to local structures of power (including *biradari*) and in relationship to the simultaneously modern/scientific/nationalist and religious/Islamic frames to which it looked for legitimization of its power.

³³ For some discussion of these tensions in their distinctive democratic form in India, see David Gilmartin, ‘Rule of Law, Rule of Life: Caste, Democracy, and the Courts in India,’ *American Historical Review*, vol. 115, no. 2 (April 2010). One could also trace them, of course, in the highly contested career of the concept of Hindutva in India.

³⁴ This has been the subject of considerable innovative historical work. See, for example, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998) and Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

The effort to construct a narrative of Pakistan, then, should push us to ask larger questions about the modern history of South Asia as a whole, and in ways that suggest the power of a narrative of civilization that was not sundered in 1947 (or, indeed, by the arrival of colonialism and modernity). Tension between moral state-making and the dynamics of local politics and worldly power, embedded in both modernity and older civilizations alike, continues to shape the dynamics of authority on both sides of a clearly drawn, if civilizationally elusive, partition border. To return to our narrative at the beginning, it is undoubtedly true that the contested relationship of ‘nation’ and ‘religion’ has had critical implications—and will continue to have critical implications—for the narrative of Pakistan’s history. But it is not by simply holding Pakistan’s emergence up against a normative template of modernity that we can make sense of the seemingly anomalous intersection of ‘religion’ and ‘nation’ that marked Pakistan’s creation, it is rather by grounding the tensions of modernity in a history of civilizational tensions much older and deeper than modernity itself. The present volume represents a small start in an attempt to place Pakistan’s story in this framework.

Part I

Colonialism, *Biradari* and Islam in the Punjab

1

Customary Law and *Shariat* in British Punjab

The most fundamental basis for the division of the population in this part of India is tribal rather than religious, and should rest, not upon community of belief or ceremonial practice, but upon ancestral community of race, in which, whether it be genuine or only suppositious, the claimants of a common origin equally believe.

Sir Robert Egerton, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, 1878

Let the idols of race and caste be destroyed!
Let the old ways that fetter men fast be destroyed!
For this only is victory, this the Faith's power,
That among the world's peoples true union should flower!

‘To the Punjab Peasant,’ Muhammed Iqbal, 1936

The conflict between the commitment to ‘race’ and ‘tribe’ and the commitment to Islamic solidarity became stark in the Punjab in the decade preceding the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Perhaps none put it so succinctly as the prominent English-educated Muslim League politico, Mumtaz Daultana. ‘Thirteen hundred years ago our Prophet taught us that all Muslims are one,’ he said, ‘that they have one culture, one organization, one interest, that Islam which is based on religious culture is the exact opposite and the most determined enemy of tribal factionalism.’¹

¹ Mumtaz Muhammad Daultana, ‘Address.’ Punjab Muslim Students Federation. Fourth Annual Session. (Lahore: Punjab Muslim Students Federation, 1944), p. 21.

But what was the root of this opposition? The notion that Islam was in its very origins based on a challenge to ‘tribal’ solidarity is one that has sometimes found expression in Western writing on Islam. In the view of one recent sociologist, for example, early Islam represented from the start ‘a partial triumph’ of urban over tribal norms. The universalism of the new Islamic community (*ummat*) based on faith rather than blood cut right across the particularism of the tribal system.² Implicit in such a view has been the assumption that the morality of Islam, derived from divine revelation, challenged by its very definition an earlier morality based on the obligations of blood relationship—of ‘tribal’ kinship.

To see the roots of the conflict between ‘tribal’ and Islamic identity solely in this light, however, would do little to help us understand the particular pressures which led to the widespread articulation of this conflict in 20th-century Punjab. Though a latent tension between the moral obligations of the faith and the moral obligations of blood may indeed be inherent in Islam, as in any religion based on divine revelation,³ there is little to suggest that before the 20th century this tension had been a critical element in the history of Punjabi Islam. On the contrary, Islam had provided in Punjab, as elsewhere, a repertoire of concepts and styles of authority which had served to encompass potentially competing values, including the values of tribal kinship, within a common Islamic idiom.⁴ In this sense, Islam had traditionally represented less a challenge to tribal identity than what might be called an idiom of integration. In the countryside in particular, the dominant forms of Islamic authority and organization, specially those associated with Islamic shrines, had served to articulate the way in which tribal groups fit into the Islamic cosmos.

² Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) pp. 35–36.

³ The tension between kinship and sense of community in European Christianity, for example, is discussed in John Bossy, ‘Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries,’ in Derek Baker, ed., *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁴ Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

To understand the emergence of a publicly expressed conflict between ‘tribal’ and ‘Islamic’ authority, therefore, we must look not just at inherent tensions in Islam, but to the peculiar cultural and political context in which these conflicts were played out. This was a context shaped fundamentally by the structure of British colonial rule. As J.C. Heesterman has suggested, the most telling crisis experienced by colonial Indian society was one of cultural integration, a crisis brought about by the inevitable cultural isolation of the colonial state from the rest of society. With the state in a domain ‘taken out and set apart from society,’ society itself had lost under the British ‘much of its diffuse but effective coherence.’ It had become, in spite of its rationalized administrative structure, ‘more parochial and fragmented.’⁵ It was this, more than any inherent conflict in Islam, which was responsible for the increasing tensions under the British in Punjabi Islam. But more specifically, the character of the conflict between ‘tribal’ and ‘Islamic’ identity was a product of the particular form which this crisis of integration took in the Punjab, a crisis shaped by the distinctive character of British policy in the province.

The British and Customary Law

In this chapter I would like to look at the conflict between *shariat* and customary law in the 20th century as an example of the wider, perceived conflict between ‘Islamic’ and ‘tribal’ identity. In a sense, the contrasting systems of *shariat* and customary law embodied two systems of morality: that derived from revelation, on the one hand, and that derived from the obligations of ‘tribal’ kinship, on the other. As the *Observer* of Lahore suggested in 1915, these two moral systems were in sharp opposition: ‘Most of the provisions of custom run counter to and are diametrically opposed to the expressed and binding injunctions of Muslim law,’ the newspaper declared.⁶ In practice, however, opposition between these two sources of law was by no means clear cut.

⁵ J.C. Heesterman, ‘Was There an Indian Reaction? Western Expansion in Indian Perspective,’ in H.L. Wesseling, ed., *Expansion and Reaction* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1978) p. 54.

⁶ *Observer* (Lahore), 25 September 1915. Excerpted in *Report on Newspapers and Periodicals in the Punjab for the Year 1915*, no. 40.

Nevertheless, the conflict between *shariat* and customary law was shaped and sharpened in the 19th and 20th centuries by the development of the law within the colonial order.

To understand the evolution of the law under the British, we should begin by looking at the relationship between the structure of Punjabi kinship and the British colonial state—a relationship which reflected the peculiar ideological requirements of the British as alien, colonial rulers. From a relatively early date, the British attempted, as a matter of policy, to tie their rural administration to the structure of rural kinship as they perceived it. For many British administrators, this was a policy of administrative necessity, a policy little different from that followed by rulers before them. But for others, it represented an effort to find for themselves indigenous ideological sources of legitimacy. As one official put it, ‘it is through the tribe and clan that Government can gain its firmest hold on the inclinations and motives of the people.’⁷ This was particularly important since the British, by the very nature of their position as culturally alien rulers, could make little claim to legitimate authority on the basis of religion. For some at least, identification of the Government with kin-based loyalties was thus a conscious alternative to an appeal to political solidarity based on religion. ‘If you weaken the sense of tribal fellowship,’ the same official thus noted, ‘the only thing that could be put in its room would be religion, not a polytheistic indifferentism or a contemplative philosophy, but a religion like that of the Sikhs or Muhammadans, that by inspiring enthusiasm would generate a sense of brotherhood; and here,’ he added pointedly, ‘the British Government could take no part.’⁸

British administration in rural Punjab was closely tied to local units of administration (most notably *zails*, consisting of roughly 10 to 40 villages) that were intended to encapsulate extended rural kinship structures within the British administration—structures that the British liked to refer to as ‘tribes.’ In fact, the term ‘tribe’ was an extremely vague one as the British used it, referring generally, as Lieutenant Governor Egerton had suggested, to any group claiming a patrilineally

⁷ C.L. Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law* (Calcutta: Government Printing, 1881) vol. 1, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

reckoned ‘ancestral community of race.’⁹ As even most British administrators realized, the structure of ‘tribe’ in this context provided little solid foundation for the organization of rural administration. Most ‘tribes’ were dispersed in innumerable villages and possessed little indigenous political organization. In choosing *zail* leaders, or *zaildars*, for example, the British found few existing ‘tribal’ leaders in the *zails*. As the system developed, *zaildars* tended to emerge under the British not only as ‘the leading men of a particular tribe or section of the country’ but also, and more important politically for the British, as ‘the representative[s] of Government’ in the *zails*.¹⁰ The structure of ‘tribal’ leadership recognized by the British was thus to a large extent artificial, adapted to serve the administrative needs of the British as much as to reflect an indigenous ‘tribal’ structure. But the recognition of leadership in terms of ‘tribal’ loyalties and solidarities was nevertheless of critical significance in an ideological sense, for it provided the British with an indigenous idiom, the idiom of *biradari*, *zat*, and *qaum*, in which rural administrative authority could be articulated.¹¹

It was in this context that the development of the system of customary law was significant. As the British elaborated their administration, they developed a system of personal law in the Punjab which was tied, not to the law of Hinduism or Islam as in many other provinces, but to a system of ‘customary law’ or, as some British officials put it, ‘tribal custom.’ Like ‘tribes’ themselves, these customs

⁹ Letter from Sec. to Govt, Punjab to Sec. to Government of India, Dept. of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, 24 August 1878. Printed in Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 1, pp. 225–26.

¹⁰ Letter, E.A. Prinsep, Settlement Commissioner, Punjab to Sec. to Financial Commissioner. 27 June 1871; Proceedings of the Lieutenant-Governor, 29 February 1872. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 61/142.

¹¹ The relationship between English and indigenous terminology was often very vague. The settlement officer of Jhelum suggested that the population of his district was ‘clearly sub-divided into tribes (*qaum* or *zat*), having a common name and generally supposed to be descended from a traditional common ancestor by agnatic descent.’ See W.S. Talbot, *General Code of Tribal Custom in the Jhelum District of the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil & Military Gazette Press, 1901). The term *biradari* appears less often in British records, but was frequently used, at least in the 20th century, to describe the political solidarity based on a claim to common descent.

varied widely throughout the Punjab. But British officials sought to systematize custom by collecting and compiling district records of ‘tribal’ customs. Such records were originally included in the village records of rights, or *wajib al-arz*. But after 1873 they were compiled into separate volumes, or *rivaj-i am*, for each district, volumes which were prepared at the time of settlement operations on the basis of oral questionnaires administered to local gatherings of influential ‘tribal’ or village leaders.¹² The ‘tribal’ character of the customs recorded was, as even some British officers realized, often open to question, since the answers given by the ‘tribes’ to these questionnaires were frequently influenced by ‘the convenience of their influential members.’¹³ This was particularly true since many of the questions applied to hypothetical situations in which little in the way of concrete example could be cited. But though the concept of ‘tribal’ custom, like that of ‘tribe’ itself, proved to be a vague one, it nevertheless served a critical ideological purpose for the British in the structuring of their rule.

This was clearly understood by at least one British official, C.L. Tupper, who prepared the first provincial questionnaire for ascertaining custom and attempted in his 1881 provincial compendium of customary law to outline general principles underlying nearly all ‘tribal’ custom in Punjab—principles which, as Tupper saw it, allowed the customary law to be developed by the British as a comprehensive, state-supported legal system. Such principles served the critical purpose of tying the British legal system to an indigenous, ‘tribal’ foundation, even as that system was structured and controlled by the British Government. ‘It necessarily happened,’ Tupper wrote, ‘that the view I had been led to form of the character of customary law in great part suggested to me the feasibility of using it for public or political ends.’¹⁴

¹² Alan Gledhill, ‘The Compilation of Customary Law in the Punjab in the Nineteenth Century,’ in John Gilissen, ed., *La radaction des coutumes dans le passe et dans le present* (Brussels: Institut de Sociologie de l’Universite Libre de Bruxelles, 1962) pp. 135–37.

¹³ Mohammad Hayat Khan Noon, *Customary Law of the Pakpattan and Divalpur Tahsils of the Montgomery District* (Lahore: Government Printing Office, 1925) p. 1.

The political importance of customary law in this context derived largely from its definition, in legal terms, of the system of kinship to which the British tied their administration. In this the central element was the law of landed inheritance. The key to the analysis of custom lay in the link between the pattern of inheritance in rural Punjab and the pattern of marriage. In spite of considerable diversity in detail, customary inheritance patterns recorded by the British tended to show widespread uniformities. In Tupper's analysis, these commonalities reflected the predominance of a pattern of marriage which fostered geographically widespread kinship linkages. This was the system of clan and village exogamy so common throughout northern India. Daughters in this system were married, as Tupper put it, 'outside the closely drawn limits of the clan, but within the looser, but still remembered circle of the tribe or race of origin.'¹⁵ The pattern of marriage was thus responsible for the prevalence in rural Punjab of geographically widespread, or, as many British put it, 'tribal' identities based on extensive, presumed ties of kinship. The pattern of marriage thus helped to define what Tupper saw as the 'tribal' pattern of kinship to which the British had tied their rural administration, and customary law had helped in this context to give the structure of kinship a legal form. Customary inheritance practices, as Tupper analyzed them, had developed in Punjab's predominantly agrarian society with a view in particular to the protection of family property within the context of this exogamous marriage network. Since daughters normally passed by marriage out of their clan or village of origin, inheritance customs were, despite variations in detail, almost universal in denying a regular share in landed inheritance to women.

This denial was of positive importance in the preservation of Punjab's kinship system; it was thus, for Tupper, a rule that took on normative significance. Though such a normative view of custom was not held by all, it nevertheless played a critical role in the subsequent evolution of customary law. Customary law was based not just on the British collection of 'customs,' but on the development of a theory of Punjabi kinship that could provide a legal foundation for the structure of British rule.' It is difficult for a civilized foreign Government always to keep vividly present before it the breadth and depth of the

¹⁵ J. Boulnois and W.H. Rattigan, *Notes on the Customary Laws of the Punjab* (1867), quoted in Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 2, p. 70.

gulf by which it may be severed from its subjects . . .,' Tupper wrote, but 'this is a difficulty which an improved theory of social history will obviously go far to remove.'¹⁶ It was not simply the recording of custom, but the development of a social theory defining a structure of law simultaneously underscoring the separation of state and society, and yet binding the structure of society to the state, that thus lay at the heart of 'customary law' as a system.

The normative implications of Tupper's theorizing were by no means accepted immediately by all British administrators in Punjab, particularly since, in the late 19th century, there was no universally accepted understanding of the nature of the legitimizing principles underlying their rule. British uncertainty about the relationship between their own authority as a centralizing bureaucratic force and the local authority embodied in kinship networks was reflected in the discussion over the question of codification of the customary law. Though Tupper had committed himself on political grounds to the principle of codification, even he had been wary of pushing codification too strongly in the face of considerable diversity in customary practice. In his 1881 compilation, he had thus recommended only the gradual introduction of declarations on custom for guiding the courts. These declarations would outline 'general custom,' or 'such particular custom as it may be politically desirable to maintain or extend,' but would only be 'presumed to represent the fact in the absence of proof to the contrary.'¹⁷ This was a far cry from translating his principles of customary law directly into practice, but even this was opposed by critics such as the Lieutenant-Governor Egerton who opposed any effort at all to freeze custom through legislative enactment. Egerton was convinced of the 'tribal' character of rural Punjabi society, but saw greater political danger for the British in the codification of customary law than in allowing it to develop piecemeal. In his view, the inevitable tendency of the British administration was to erode 'tribal' ties—'to dissolve the tribal bond and to give free scope to individual energy.' Though Egerton had no desire to accelerate this trend, he felt any official legislative

¹⁶ Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 2, p. 98. 'A sound theory,' Tupper added, 'would not merely inculcate moderation in the present; it would be a standing guide to continuous progress.'

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 23.

codification could only be politically dangerous, tending in the face of gradual social change to leave 'the Legislature in the lurch.'¹⁸

The question of codification of the customary law was shelved in the 1880s, and though later much discussed, never carried out.¹⁹ On one level, this was a reflection of the tensions in British rule. The British saw themselves as bringing 'progress' and social advance to the Punjab, and from this perspective the freezing of a 'tribal' social order was for some British officials in overt tension with this ideal. But on another level, the vague interest in 'progress' and the bringing of 'civilization' to India was easily reconciled, for most British officials, with the notion that the protection of an indigenous 'tribal' framework brought stability and order to Punjabi society in ways that were conducive to a vaguely defined vision of long-term progress. Central to the very success of colonial rule, for these officials, was the separation of a rational, modern 'state' from a 'society' defined by its own indigenous, traditional principles. In the very act of systematizing the principles defining society, the state sought to reconcile them with progress. As Tupper put it, 'A tribe in the chains of its own customs, unrelaxed and unrefined, may stand still for centuries. But a tribe, recognized and lifted into the system of British administration, has, in the guardianship of the governing body, the best possible chance of disusing savagery and learning the wisdom of civilized men.'²⁰

But the evolution of customary law along these lines was not without its ambiguities. Though Tupper's principles of customary law were formulated after wide observation of Punjabi society and the extensive recording of customs, they could by no means subsume all the varieties of Punjabi kinship. Tupper's view of Punjabi marriage patterns, for example, though generally characteristic of the dominant Jat and Rajput clans of Punjab was, by his own evidence, hardly universal. Many Muslims of western Punjab in particular did not

¹⁸ Letter from W.M. Young, Sec. to Govt., of Punjab to Officiating Sec. to Govt. of India, Home, Revenue and Agriculture Dept., February 10, 1881, printed in Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 2, p. 221.

¹⁹ The history of the debate on the codification issue up to 1915 is covered in Notes by Messrs. B.D. Watson and G. Worsley, Under-Secretaries to Govt., printed in *Report on the Punjab Codification of Customary Law Conference (September 1915)* (Lahore: Govt. Printing, 1915), pp. 51–59.

²⁰ Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 1, p. 20.

marry outside the village as Tupper suggested, but tended to prefer marriages ‘of close affinity within the clan.’²¹ In such circumstances, the rigid exclusion of daughters from inheritance was naturally not so ubiquitous as legal theorists like Tupper felt on principle that it should have been.²²

But although such ambiguities added considerable complexity to the system of customary law, they did not, in the end, alter the basic principles of the law that Tupper had identified, nor did they lessen the political importance of these principles for the British. Though variations in kinship were recognized, an idiom of kin-based solidarity was used by the British as a legitimizing foundation for their own legal policy. While not denying the particularistic power of the idiom of ‘tribal’ solidarity, the British sought to transcend that particularism not by an appeal to transcendent religious principles, but rather by identifying a scientific, structural logic underlying Punjab’s system of ‘tribal’ kinship. In this sense, the idiom of kin-based solidarity for the British had become itself an idiom of integration. The structure of kinship had provided not only a foundation for the structure of the administration but also, through the elaboration of the law, an indigenous idiom manipulated by the British for the support of the colonial state.

Customary Law versus *Shariat*

It is in light of this close connection between customary law and the colonial state that the political vision of customary law and *shariat* as competing legal systems thus developed its particular form in 20th century Punjab. The development of a self-conscious

²¹ Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 2, p. 200.

²² Naturally, the decisions of the courts tended over the long term to affect the views of the people themselves on what their ‘customs’ actually were. For officers in the field who were collecting customary law, this could on occasion engender considerable confusion. As a Settlement Officer commented in 1910 on one point of custom, ‘Answers to enquiries on this point were vague and being generally based on the experience of the various tribes in the law courts cannot be considered reliable evidence of customary law.’ A.J.W. Kitchin, *Customary Law of the Attock District* (Lahore: Civil & Military Gazette Press, revised edition, 1911) p. 14.

Muslim identity in 20th-century Punjab was, at least in part, the result of cultural opposition to colonial domination, and such an identity was for many Muslims closely tied to the public avowal of the *shariat*. As Geertz has written in *Islam Observed*, the European colonizers, whatever else they might be, could never be Muslims²³—a fact that the British themselves had recognized clearly in their policy in the Punjab. For those, like the ulama, who were primarily concerned with Islamic norms, the maintenance of Muslim identity in the colonial setting required an increasing emphasis on the presentation of these norms in selfconscious, public terms. That adherence to the inheritance law of *shariat* should be emphasized in this context is hardly surprising. As one Muslim meeting resolved in urging public support for the recognition of the inheritance rights of daughters under *shariat*, ‘He who does not believe in the Quran and the Prophet cannot be a Muhammadan.’²⁴ Adherence to the *shariat* had thus become, in this context, a critical element in the preservation of personal Muslim identity.

But to understand the particular character of the tension between ‘tribal’ and Islamic identities, we must understand the law’s broader political implications. The development of customary law under the British had aroused opposition in Punjab not only because it was a system supported by the colonial regime but also because it reflected a special view of the role of localized kin-based loyalties in the construction of the political order. The development of the law, in this sense, was closely related to the development of the colonial system in general. In organizing their rule, the British had developed in Punjab a system of political integration in which the idiom of ‘tribal’ solidarity, in contrast to the *shariat*, had played a central role.

In this sense, the British development of customary law was just one part of the larger colonial political fabric. The increasingly overt efforts of the British at the turn of the century to define the ‘tribal’ political bases of their rule were exemplified most clearly by the passage of the Alienation of Land Act in 1901. This Act, which restricted sales of land from those who were members of ‘agricultural

²³ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) pp. 62–65.

²⁴ *Zamindar* (Lahore), 6 December 1915. Excerpted in *Report on Newspapers and*

tribes' to those who were not, openly identified the stability of British rule in Punjab with the stability of Punjab's statutorily defined 'agricultural tribes.'²⁵ Similarly, the Pre-emption Act of 1906, like the Land Alienation Act, indicated the subordination in British thinking of the concern for giving 'free scope to individual energy,' as Egerton had put it, to the concern for maintaining a politically solid 'tribal' base.²⁶ These concerns carried over to influence the British introduction of electoral institutions into the Punjab in the 20th century, as the British sought to maintain this structure even as they developed new political institutions aimed toward encompassing within the government a more significant popular voice. Though the introduction of institutions of electoral politics in Punjab was gradual and complex, the establishment of an elected Provincial Council in 1920, and later of a more broadly based Provincial Assembly, suggested a fundamental British view of society as based on local—and largely 'tribal'—units of social cohesion linked together through their incorporation into a common, provincial institutional framework.

That this influenced structures of indigenous politics is hardly a surprise. Subsequently, for many agriculturist leaders themselves, the Land Alienation Act (with its 'tribal' definitions) came to be seen, as one leading politician put it, as the 'Magna Carta of their political and economic life.'²⁷ It not only helped to protect lands from alienation, but, more importantly, it also conferred on them, as leaders of the 'agricultural tribes,' a special political status by identifying these 'tribes' as the foundation of the agrarian order. Whatever the actual roots of their local authority, rural leaders thus tended to an important degree to articulate their claim to influence at the provincial level in

²⁵ The overt concern of the Land Alienation Act was to prevent land from passing into the hands of non-agriculturalist moneylenders, but the act was structured so as to make the preservation of land in the hands of 'agricultural tribes' its primary purpose. For a detailed discussion of the administrative controversies leading up to the passage of the act, see P.H.M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972).

²⁶ The passage of the Pre-emption Act was, in fact, seen by some as a first step in the codification of customary law. Note by G. Worsley, Under-Secretary to Govt., Punjab, Revenue Dept., 18 February 1915, printed in *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, pp. 58–59.

²⁷ Statement of Sir Fazli Husain, *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1928–29, vol. 12, p. 709.

terms of 'tribal' leadership. This tendency found concrete expression in the 1920s with the formation in the Provincial Council of the Punjab Unionist Party. As a party of primarily Muslim (and some Hindu) rural leaders, it served in the 1920s and 1930s as a provincial platform for the expression of local interests as defined in the Land Alienation Act. As one of the Unionist Party's critics declared in the 1930s, 'the Unionists seem to believe that the Land Alienation Act is to them what the Vedas and the Holy Quran are to the Hindus and Mussalmans.'²⁸

For those who attacked customary law and supported *shariat*, therefore, the issue in the 1920s and 1930s was not simply one of personal identity and personal adherence to the law, but rather of the definition of the cultural foundations for the integration of state and society. In personal terms, most urban supporters of *shariat* already adhered to the inheritance rules of *shariat* in any case, and these rules were generally enforced in the courts. Since customary law had never been codified, it was even open to prominent agriculturalist families to renounce the 'un-Muslim provisions of the Punjab custom'²⁹ if they so desired, and to announce, at the revision of the *rivaj-i am*, their adherence to *shariat*. For most supporters of *shariat*, however, the question involved not just personal practice, but the principles on which 'state' and 'society' were defined. In this context, the problem that provoked opposition was not simply the British recognition and recording of Punjabi custom, but rather the colonial attempt to transform customary law into a *system*, which was thus, in its very nature, cast as an alternative to the *shariat* as a frame for the ordering of society and for the legitimization of the state.

These issues were clearly evidenced in debates over the subject in the Provincial Council. Criticism of British reliance on customary law was nothing new in the early 1930s, but at that time a bitter debate on the subject was touched off by a bill brought into the Council on behalf of one of the most prominent and powerful landowners of the Punjab, Sir Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana of Shahpur District. The bill called for the establishment of the legal impartibility of Sir Umar Hayat's important estate, in spite of the conflict of this principle with the inheritance rules of the *shariat*. Sir Umar Hayat's motives for the

²⁸ Raja Narendra Nath in the *Tribune* (Lahore), 28 April 1936.

²⁹ *Observer* (Lahore), 25 September 1915. Excerpted in *Report on Newspapers and*

introduction of this bill are not completely clear, since according to the Tiwana *rivaj-i am*, succession by primogeniture was already well-established for 'Tiwana chiefs.' The real issue may have been the definition of Sir Umar Hayat's own position as a 'tribal chief,' since his political power derived not so much from 'tribal' tradition as from his extraordinary influence in the British army and administration, and from his control of one of Punjab's largest and most profitable landed estates.³⁰ His own self-conscious cultivation of the image of a 'tribal' leader was suggested by his formation of a Tiwana tent-pegging and polo team with which he toured the cantonments of the Punjab, attempting to bring 'the name of the Tiwana clan and his district to the fore.'³¹ Whatever the precise character of his 'tribal' position, however, the establishment of the impartibility of his estate was undoubtedly an issue of long-term political significance for his family. The object of the bill as argued by the mover was 'simply [to secure] the sanction of this House to put the custom on a stronger foundation so that in future the family may be saved any further trouble with respect to litigation.'³² In this sense, Sir Umar Hayat's goal was to secure, through the intervention of the Provincial Council, the position of his family as 'tribal' leaders within the framework on which the British administration rested.

In assessing this bill, Muslim leaders in the Council were initially in sharp opposition as regards its implications for the definition of Muslim identity. It is clear that for Sir Umar Hayat the bill involved no personal conflict with religion. Sir Umar Hayat was himself a *murid* of the influential reformist *pir*, Sayyid Mehr Ali Shah of Golra, and he prided himself on his close associations with many of 'the Mohammadan spiritual leaders, saints and pirs' of his district, for whom he sometimes mediated with the Government. His 'knowledge

³⁰ Sir Umar Hayat descended from a cadet branch of the main Mitha Tiwana lineage. For a history of the family see Lepel Griffin and Charles Massy, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil & Military Gazette Press, revised edition, 1910) vol. 2, pp. 167–83.

³¹ 'A Brief Account of the Career of Captain the Hon'ble Malik Umar Hayat Khan, Tiwana, C.I.E., M.V.O.,' included in Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/1406.

³² Speech of Shaikh Abdul Ghani, *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1931, vol. 19, p. 791.

of Islam and its tenets' was, he wrote to Government, 'in no way inferior to that of the saints and pirs of the Muhammadan public.'³³ To introduce a bill relating to the succession to property within his family—a subject long governed by custom—was thus for him not a matter of religion at all, but of 'tribal' politics. But for others the issue appeared in a far different light. For Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq, an urban Kashmiri Council member from Amritsar, the bill represented a clear violation of Islamic law, and he cited *fatwas* of leading ulama to prove his case. 'Islam has strict injunctures against any procedure of this kind,' he said, 'and when you take such a step you utterly run counter to the wishes of God and the Holy Prophet.' In Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq's view, Sir Umar Hayat had certain personal obligations as a Muslim. Granted that Sir Umar Hayat's family did not, even before the introduction of the bill, 'strictly follow Shariat,' but still, he said, 'they are at least born as Muhammadans.'³⁴

For most rural Muslims in the Council, the real debate was thus not simply about whether Sir Umar Hayat would or would not distribute his property according to *shariat*, since the customs for the distribution of Tiwana property were already fixed by customary law, subject only to the interpretation of the British courts. The debate was rather about whether the Legislature itself could or should give official sanction to such a procedure—a question related intimately to the principles on which the Muslim members of the Council perceived their moral claim to legislate for the province. At root, the real issue was thus their association with the systematization of 'tribal' custom rather than religious law as a foundation for state authority. The moral dilemma for many Muslim members in this context was expressed clearly by one rural member, Chaudhri Shah Muhammad of Sheikhpura.

Chaudhri Shah Muhammad : . . . If Sir Umar Hayat Khan wants to assure of his property remaining intact, the Rivaj-i Am in his own family can stand him in good stead. Then where lies the necessity of

³³ 'A Brief Account of the Career of . . . Malik Umar Hayat . . .' Sir Umar Hayat stated that he had played a critical role in arranging for the participation of many of the *pirs* of Punjab in the Delhi Durbar of 1911. For discussion of the role of *pirs* in colonial Punjab, see chapter 3.

³⁴ Statement of Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq, *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1931, vol. 20, pp. 61–66.

mutilating the law of the Prophet of Islam? Why should the zamindars of this Council be forced to enact a measure contrary to the Shari‘at?

The Hon’ble Captain Sardar Sikander Hyat Khan: The zamindars do not follow Islamic law.

Chaudhri Shah Muhammad : That does not matter. . . . We cannot murder the Islamic law with our own hands. . . . If this Bill had been passed without inviting us to give our opinion, I for one, would have raised no objection.³⁵

For Chaudhri Shah Muhammad, the central issue was not what law was followed by rural leaders, whatever the *fatwas* of the ulama might say.³⁶ Rather, the issue for most Muslims in the Provincial Council related to the moral principles on which ‘society’ was to be integrated. Implicit in Chaudhri Shah Muhammad’s remarks, and those of many others who opposed the bill, was a tacit rejection of the transformation of ‘tribal’ organization into a state-recognized *principle* of integration that transcended and encompassed the moral authority of the shariat. While the recognition of ‘custom’ as a pragmatic response to the pressures of extended kinship was one thing, the recognition of ‘customary law’ as an alternative *system* for order was quite another. When it came to inheritance, as Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq put it, ‘the shares which the Quran has fixed, this Council has absolutely no right to alter.’³⁷ Such arguments were not enough to sway the majority of the Muslim members of the Council, who, under the influence of Government and the Unionist Party, voted to pass the bill. But many were embarrassed by the debate and chose, as Mian Nurullah charged in opposing the bill, to absent themselves from the Council when important *fatwas* against the bill were quoted. ‘Unfortunately this Bill relates to one of the most powerful zamindars of the province,’

³⁵ Statement of Chaudhri Shah Muhammad and the Hon’ble Captain Sardar Sikander Hyat Khan, *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1931, vol. 20, p. 199.

³⁶ This is not to suggest that Chaudhri Shah Muhammad was not influenced by the ulama, for his comments suggest that he was. Rather, it appears that his political concerns went beyond those embodied in the ulama’s *fatwas*.

³⁷ *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1931, vol. 20, p. 64.

Nurullah said, 'and nobody has the courage of conviction to rise to the occasion and say that the Bill should not receive our support.'³⁸

But the political and moral issues involved in the debate in fact ran far deeper than the influence of one powerful rural leader. The continuing *political* importance for many rural Muslim leaders of the principles of integration on which the colonial system had been built was indicated by reactions to a subsequent bill proposed in response to the passage of Sir Umar Hayat's bill. This was a bill submitted by Malik Muhammad Din of Lahore city, which called on the Council to set the record straight by sweeping away the British system of customary law altogether and by endorsing the *shariat* in its place as the personal law of all Muslims. In practical terms, this bill stood no real prospect of passage, for the Government and the Unionist Party leadership opposed it. But the opinions solicited when the bill was circulated to the districts for comments indicated the political and moral dilemmas rural Muslims faced at this time in dealing with the issue.

On one level, these comments focused attention on the question as to how far rural Punjabis did or did not follow 'tribal' inheritance patterns in their own personal dealings. There was little doubt, some noted, that in some parts of the province atleast, personal adherence to *shariat* in matters of inheritance was on the increase. Though application of the *shariat* in inheritance matters had long been widespread in the towns, by the 1930s the spread of education had begun to lead, as the Commissioner of Multan Division suggested, to an increasing awareness and acceptance of *shariat* in some parts of the countryside. This tendency was particularly noticeable in the more commercialized parts of the province, such as Lyallpur District, where connections between town and countryside had expanded rapidly and where the power of British administrative intermediaries was weakest. 'There is a marked tendency among the Muslim agriculturists to give up their personal laws in favour of the Muhammadan Law,' one Lyallpur *tahsildar* remarked. 'The idea is gaining ground and has come to stay' and was even gaining increasing recognition in the

³⁸ Statement of Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq, *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, 1931, vol. 20, p. 70.

British courts.³⁹ Nevertheless, the general tenor of opinion was that not so much had changed as to alter the limited attention in rural inheritance patterns to the rule of *shariat*. For the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population in the rural areas, where the rate of illiteracy remained at over 90 percent, the impact of the spread of education was still very slight, and the political and economic logic supporting customary law retained undeniable significance. For most rural leaders, the introduction of *shariat* continued to be seen as a challenge to the basic structure of authority in which their local and provincial power had been articulated. As one Muslim *tahsildar* of Gujrat District declared, in summing up this opinion, 'To abrogate the tribal law altogether by one stroke of the pen and thereby substitute the Muhammadan law instead would not only be impossible under the circumstances but would completely disintegrate the homogeneity of the agricultural tribe.'⁴⁰ Sardar Mohammad Shahbaz Khan of Kasur was even more pointed. 'Strangers will freely intermix,' he said, 'and their presence would lead to the disruption of tribes, giving rise to all kinds of disputes.'⁴¹

This is not to say, of course, that all were in agreement on the substance of customary law. The degree to which such 'tribes' possessed the social cohesion to control the inheritance of their members is highly questionable, for intensive litigation over inheritance had long been endemic under the system of customary law. But the claim for the protection of 'tribal' rules of inheritance related to more than the problematic character of local 'tribal' solidarity; it was also tied closely to the assertion by these rural leaders of a claim to political power and status at the provincial level. The most frequently cited drawback to *shariat* in this connection was the fear that in abrogating the customary law, the introduction of *shariat* might also undermine the Land Alienation Act. As the Government's Legal Remembrancer pointed out, the application of customary law had helped to guarantee that land was always 'protected by the Punjab

³⁹ Statement of M. Abdur Rahman, *tahsildar*, Jaranwala. Punjab Civil Secretariat Archives (PCSA), Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴⁰ Statement of M. Ahmed Khan, *tahsildar*, Kharian. PCSA, Home judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴¹ Statement of Khan Bahadur Sardar Muhammad Shahbaz Khan, Honorary Magistrate of Kasur. PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

Alienation of Land Act' since it prevented land from passing through inheritance by daughters out of the agnatically defined 'agricultural tribe.'⁴² Many agriculturist leaders seemed to attach critical importance to this. As the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana District put it, 'If as a result of the passing of the bill the protection afforded by the Punjab Alienation of Land Act will be automatically withdrawn, then the Muslim agriculturists are opposed to the introduction of the bill.'⁴³ The linking of the system of customary law to the Land Alienation Act was thus a signal of the continuing concern of these leaders with the system of law as a cultural and political prop for that system of integration in which their power had developed under the British.

The real dilemma, however, was that despite the continuing political importance of customary law, it had become increasingly difficult by the 1930s to translate this support for custom into moral terms. Though the indigenous idiom of 'tribal' kinship had in fact been effectively adapted by the British to structure the colonial system, the very process of political integration under the British had for many weakened the 'tribal' idiom's moral power. Even for those who strongly supported the system of customary law, it was increasingly difficult to deny the moral authority of the *shariat* as a symbol of incorporation of a wider moral community, particularly once the introduction of elections had given the community a more overt political voice. As one Muslim *tahsildar* expressed it, it was hard for anyone, in giving opinions on Malik Muhammad Din's bill, to withstand publicly 'the stigma of opposing the introduction of law sanctioned and sanctified by the Holy Quran.'⁴⁴ Even so powerful a figure in rural Punjabi politics as Nawab Fazal Ali of Gujrat District thus felt compelled to express his own strong opposition to the bill and his support for customary law in terms, ironically, drawing on the moral authority of the *shariat*. Since the 'agricultural tribes' had already legitimized customary law by their willingness to follow it, he

⁴² Statement of the Legal Remembrancer. PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴³ Statement of DC, Ludhiana. PCSA, Home judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴⁴ Statement of M. Sultan Bakhsh, *tahsildar*, Gujrat. PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20,

said, 'the existing practice (Rivaj) has the sanctity of the will according to Shariat.'⁴⁵

Others turned to rural religious leaders to gain support for custom. For the backers of customary law the support of rural 'saints and *pirs*' was particularly important since these were leaders whose religious authority had traditionally derived not primarily from their knowledge of the Quran or the classical law, but from their local mediation between the larger Islamic tradition and the cultures of the rural population. Many of these religious leaders in fact followed local, 'tribal' inheritance customs with regard to their own property. As a Jat *zaildar* of Gujrat put it, 'most Muslim religious leaders, being themselves zamindars, have been following this custom,' and for many, this in itself gave religious authority to the workings of custom. 'Custom is not against religion,' the *zaildar* thus declared.⁴⁶ Such support for customary law was particularly important in the case of men like Makhdum Murid Husain Qureshi, *sajjadda nishin* of the shrine of Baha al-Haq Zakariya (d. 1263) at Multan, who had long been influential in provincial politics and active in the Unionist Party, and whose local prestige gave powerful religious legitimacy to the opposition of the application of the inheritance rules of *shariat*.⁴⁷

But such opposition in the end did relatively little to bolster the moral position of those who argued for the retention of customary law as a state-supported *system*. Though the moral influence of leaders like Makhdum Murid Husain was doubtless still considerable in local affairs, the moral character of their authority was of necessity altogether different at the provincial level, where the conflict between customary law and *shariat* was increasingly debated as a question of state support for opposing systems. Whatever their local prestige, *pirs* like Makhdum Murid Husain could thus do little at the provincial level to answer the call for adherence to the *shariat* as a symbolic statement of the commitment of society as a whole to an Islamic moral order.

⁴⁵ Statement of Khan Bahadur Chaudhri Fazal Ali, O.B.E., M.L.C., PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴⁶ Statement of Chaudhri Bahawal Bakhsh, president, Zamindara League, Gujrat. PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

⁴⁷ Makhdum Murid Husain was reported by the Deputy Commissioner of Multan to be in opposition to Malik Muhammad Din's bill. PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20,

The crisis in the conflict between customary law and *shariat* was thus, in the end, a crisis of cultural integration under the British—a crisis which became increasingly acute as British rule drew to a close. As Muslims gained a growing share of political power, the tension between custom and *shariat*, between ‘tribal’ and ‘Islamic’ political idioms, permeated Punjabi Muslim politics. The call for the rural population to forget the bonds of ‘tribe’ and to remember only the name of Islam became the common coin of the Pakistan campaign in the 1940s. The Muslim League called for the recognition of a transcendent Islamic morality as the foundation for a new, independent state. Muslims were told to abandon the claims of ‘*biradari*, *rishtadar* and *zati ta`alluqat*,’⁴⁸ as one appeal put it, since ‘tribal’ and Islamic loyalties were, in the words of Daultana, ‘exact opposite[s].’ Such appeals were, in fact, nothing new in Punjab, for they had long been made by urban supporters of the *shariat*. But in the years just before 1947, these appeals were made not just by the advocates of strict personal adherence to Islamic law, but by many rural leaders as well—men who had in some cases long followed custom in their own families. For some of these men, the contradictions in this position were overwhelming, since the rules of customary law had played an important part in the maintenance of their own local power under the British administration. But in 1946 and 1947, it was not local power, but the construction of a new political and moral order—and the definition of new foundations for linking society and state—that was at issue.

With the creation of Pakistan, the attempt to ground the Punjabi political system in a new Islamic idiom thus came to fruition. As a symbol of the new state’s cultural foundations, the *shariat* was adopted in 1948 as the official system of personal law supported in Punjab by the new Islamic state.⁴⁹ But even in Pakistan, the conflict between *shariat* and the idiom of local, kin-based authority persisted. For many of those rural leaders who had supported the creation of Pakistan, the official adoption of the personal law of *shariat* signaled little more than the official definition of a new Islamic idiom for the

⁴⁸ ‘Brotherhood, relatives, and personal connections.’ *Inqilab* (Lahore), 11 November 1945.

⁴⁹ The personal law of *shariat* superseded customary law in nearly all cases by the West Punjab Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1948.

integration of the old agrarian order. But for others, particularly among the ulama, the adoption of *shariat* in Pakistan represented much more. For them the law was not just a symbol of the state's cultural foundations; it represented in addition a program for individual religious commitment and reform, a rejection of the primacy of the local loyalties on which the British had built their authority. As Pakistan constructed its own political system, the political role of the law continued to be a subject of intense controversy.

***Biradari* and Bureaucracy:
The Politics of Muslim Kinship Solidarity in 20th-century
Punjab**

Increasingly, historians have stressed that the history of the state and the history of kinship (and the family) are closely related. Historians of Europe, for example, have traced the often complex relationships between the centralizing monarchies of the early modern period and the increasing social prominence of the patriarchal conjugal family, stressing the close connections ‘between the structures of the modern family and modern state formation.’¹ Historians of modern India have also noted the complex relationships between colonial ideology, colonial state structure, and changing structures of kinship, family and authority in Indian society. Lata Mani, for example, has shown the ways in which British reliance on reified notions of ‘Hindu’ law served simultaneously to strengthen Brahmanic and state authority in much of India, linking the authority of the colonial state to the upholding of ideal textually-based forms of patriarchal family authority.² State appropriation of Indian caste and kinship categories strengthened simultaneously the administrative authority of the state and that of local kin and caste leaders. As historical work is increasingly demonstrating, the construction of the colonial state and the colonial economy carried important political implications for the changing forms and political roles of kinship in Indian society, just as

¹ Bonnie C. Smith, ‘Introduction’ to special issue on ‘Women and Gender in French History,’ *French Historical Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (July 1989), pp. 1–2.

² Lata Mani, ‘Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India,’ *Cultural Critique* (Fall 1989).

new forms of kinship and gender relations helped to stabilize the colonial regime.

Religion has played so central a role in the history of modern Punjab that historians have often overlooked the important relationship between the state, kinship systems and politics in the shaping of modern Punjabi history. But the relationship between forms of kinship and forms of political authority can be traced in the modern political history of Punjab as well—particularly in the political prominence in colonial Punjab of the *biradari*, or ‘brotherhood’ of extended kin. The continuing importance of *biradaris* in Punjabi electoral politics—on both sides of the Indian-Pakistani border—attests to the importance of these kinship structures in the emergence of modern Punjabi politics. Sometimes portrayed as ‘primordial’ or ‘tribal’ in nature, *biradaris* in fact emerged in modern Punjabi politics in counterpoint to the politics of bureaucratic centralization under British colonial rule. Their history illustrates the intimate relationship between kin-based politics and the emerging bureaucratic order of the modern state. Though powerful *biradari* loyalties certainly predated the establishment of the British colonial state (as the Persian origin of the term suggests), the distinctive political roles played by *biradaris* in modern Punjabi politics reflect the legacies—and the contradictions—in the relationship established by colonial rule between the state and Punjabi society.

***Biradari*, Bureaucracy and the State**

Many analysts have discussed the *biradari* as a distinctively Punjabi kinship institution, but the definition of *biradari* has continued to pose problems of interpretation. Varying definitions can be found in historical and anthropological writing. The very existence of diverse definitions reflects the inexactness and fluidity of this term as used by Punjabis.

As Hamza Alavi noted in 1972, *biradari* signifies, in its most basic meaning, a descent group, ‘a collection of related households.’ At the root of the concept lie Punjabi reckonings of patrilineal kinship; ‘in its most general meaning,’ Alavi writes, ‘the descent group, the *biradari*, includes in principle all those between whom actual links of common descent can be traced in the paternal line, regardless of the number of

generations that have elapsed.’³ But in practice, as many analysts have discovered, the boundaries of *biradaris* cannot be objectively calculated simply from genealogical tables. As an institution of corporate solidarity, the form and size of *biradaris* are strongly shaped by particular political and social contexts. Patterns of marriage connections play an important but not absolutely determinative role. As Parvez Wakil notes, the *biradari* sometimes includes affines as well as patrilineal relatives (a distinction blurred in any case by the practice among many Punjabi Muslims of preferred parallel cousin endogamy). More importantly, however, the boundaries of *biradari* depend on the level and nature of communication among households, ‘on memory, contact over geographical distances, degree of strictness of endogamy and most of all on an intricate gift exchange system.’⁴ And these factors in turn vary with social class, control over land, wealth and property, networks of economic exchange and political structures.

The system of gift exchanges, known most often as *vartan bhanji*, provides the clearest guide to the extent and shape of *biradari*, and also defines its essentially transactional nature. At the most local level, the ‘system of reciprocal but unequal exchange of gifts on certain ceremonial occasions’ and the ‘ritual acceptance (or rejection) of invitations to the ceremonial occasions on which gifts are exchanged’ provide the foundations, as Alavi argues, for the activation of an ideology of corporate *biradari* solidarity.⁵ Both the working boundaries of the local *biradari* and the context for the emergence of *biradari* leaders thus are provided by patterns of reciprocal, yet unequal, exchange. In spite of the underlying ideology of solidarity based on descent, *biradari* leaders are defined not primarily by

³ Hamza A. Alavi, ‘Kinship in West Punjab Villages,’ *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, No. VI (December 1972), p. 2.

⁴ Parvez Wakil, ‘Explorations into the Kin Networks of the Punjabi Society: A Preliminary Statement,’ in Muhammad Fayyaz, ed., *Pakistani Sociological Writings*, vol. 1 (Lahore: Punjab University Sociologists Alumni Association, 1970) pp. 5–7.

⁵ Hamza A. Alavi, ‘The Politics of Dependence: A Village in West Punjab,’ *South Asian Review*, vol. 4, no. 2 (January 1971) pp. 116–17. An extensive account of such ritualized gift exchanges is provided by Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* (Columbia University Press, 1960).

genealogical position, but by the bonds of reciprocal obligation they have established with other *biradari* members, largely as a result of the ability (through wealth, landholdings, personal energy, official connections, political savvy, skill as mediators, etc.) to provide service to their *biradari* cohorts. Though leadership may be formally recognized through membership in a *biradari* council or *panchayat*, it does not require such formal recognition so long as it is popularly recognized and confirmed in ritual patterns of exchanges. In some cases, this solidarity is reinforced by the existence in villages of *biradari* meeting places, or *daras*. These (like the *deras* of many western Punjabi landlords, which can be focuses for the distribution of largesse) serve to reinforce the sense of reciprocal obligation binding *biradari* members together; indeed they may also suggest the common pastoral roots of the authority of many western Punjabi landlords and of the institution of *biradari*.⁶ Critically, however, while bonds of ‘tribal’ descent define *biradari* solidarities and ideology, neither the boundaries of *biradari* identity nor the patterns of *biradari* leadership are fixed firmly by genealogy. They result, rather, from ongoing (and changing) patterns of social transaction and contestation, symbolized by ritualized exchanges.

Forms of local *biradari* have thus long varied in response to a wide range of factors. At the local level, institutions of *biradari* solidarity have tended to be strongest among relatively independent smalllandholding peasants (though these ties have not uncommonly divided the various lineages of dominant land controllers within villages). Weaker have been the *biradari* ties among village service groups (*kammis* or *kamins*) whose households are enmeshed in relations of dependency with village land controllers. Similarly, large landlords have tended to be less susceptible to *biradari* influence

⁶ Douglas Merrey suggests that, as distinctive institutions, *biradaris* may have emerged in western Punjab out of the processes of semi-nomadic settlement. Self-conscious *biradaris*, he argues, grew out of the fluid idioms of nomadic, patrilineal kinship as the British awarded rights in land to individuals while still recognizing the residual rights of agnatic kin. Douglas James Merrey, ‘Irrigation, Poverty and Social Change in a Village of Pakistani Punjab: An Historical and Cultural Ecological Analysis,’ Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1983, p. 559. For a discussion of *biradari daras*, see also pp. 570–71, 576.

locally than small holders, but have developed in some cases more geographically extensive *biradari* networks, rooted in more widely dispersed marriage patterns and in broader networks of communication.⁷ In some parts of Punjab, among the settled, formerly pastoral ‘tribes’ of southwestern Punjab for example, landlords have used *biradari* idioms to define relations with their poorer ‘tribal’ cohorts, even as they have employed a wide range of material levers of domination over them. Not surprisingly, the relationships between *biradari* and other categories of Punjabi kinship relations (*zat*, *got*, *patti*, *khandan*, etc.) have also varied, not only between social classes but between geographical regions of the Punjab as well.⁸

Of central importance in analyzing the local *political* significance of *biradari*, however, is an understanding of the relationship between *biradari* and the structures of state authority and bureaucracy defining the modern Punjabi state. As a term describing in essence an idiom of transactional political solidarity based on kinship, the meaning of *biradari* developed historically in close interaction with the contours of the British colonial system. At the heart of any analysis of *biradari*, therefore, is an analysis of the political structures, incorporating kinship categories, first established in Punjab by the British in the second half of the 19th century.

Essential to this is an understanding of the British colonial state’s two, seemingly contradictory, sides. On the one hand, colonial authority in Punjab (as in the rest of India) was grounded in the establishment of rationalized, bureaucratic structures of administration. This was central to the British vision of themselves as ‘scientific’ rulers, a vision that in their own minds set the British apart from the people they ruled over. Whether in revenue administration,

⁷ Hamza Alavi, ‘Kinship in West Punjab Villages,’ p. 5. See also, Saghir Ahmad, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1977) p. 83.

⁸ For a short, relatively recent review of the referents of this Punjabi kinship terminology and some of its variations, see Douglas Merrey, ‘Irrigation, Poverty and Social Change in a Village of Pakistani Punjab,’ Appendix I (‘Social Organization of Rural Punjab: Terminology’) pp. 768–83. There are of course a number of more extended studies of Punjabi kinship in particular social contexts: for example, Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981), which focuses on a village in Jullundur District and on Punjabi migrants in the UK.

law, or structures of political authority and representation, the British established a structure of administration grounded in rationalized, Weberian principles of bureaucratic administration. At the same time, however, the British saw affective ('non-rational') bonds, based on custom, religion and kinship, as critical defining features of Punjabi society, and thus central to the stability of Punjabi society under their rule. Unable to draw, as a culturally alien regime, on the direct loyalties of the population, the British saw the maintenance of these stabilizing social bonds as necessary for their own bureaucratic regime to function. *Biradari*, like other forms of indigenous kin-based solidarity, thus became politically salient for the British. But to simultaneously control these indigenous structures and yet separate the ruling colonial state from these 'nonrational' loyalties, the British sought to embed them firmly within 'rational' categories that they defined and controlled.⁹

The significance of British policy emerged initially in the regime's definition of local land rights and inheritance law. Even as the British defined a structure of individual private property rights, they also 'fixed' the position of each landholder with respect to a village kinship structure, by recording it bureaucratically in village records at each land settlement. Carefully recorded genealogical tables defined rights in the commons, rights of preemption, and reversionary inheritance rights to land, all of which signaled the importance of kin-based local communities within the structure of colonial land administration. The British concern to control and manipulate local kinship structures emerged more explicitly in the state's definition of a system of customary law, defining laws of family (and 'tribal') relations. Basing customary law in theory on the recording of local and 'tribal' customs in Punjab, the British interpreted Punjabi customs so as to give systematic primacy to agnatic succession to land, excluding daughters from inheritance rights and granting extensive potential rights (in the

⁹ Unlike most modernizing European states, which attempted to confine affective kinship bonds to the 'private,' apolitical realm of the family, the British in Punjab did not try to exclude these bonds from the political realm. Rather, they accepted the potential political importance of such bonds, but sought to confine them to a world of local, indigenous culture, separated from the rational, bureaucratic world defining the power of the colonial ruling authority.

absence of sons or other close male relatives) to male agnates in the patrilineage. By seeking to stabilize patrilineal control over land and over women, the British thus sought to stabilize rural Punjabi society generally.¹⁰ By bureaucratically appropriating and defining a *system* of 'tribal' kinship categories as the social bedrock of Punjabi society, the state sought to stabilize at the same time its own 'rational,' bureaucratic administration.

The larger political implications of this 'tribal' kinship structure for the British were signaled most dramatically by the promulgation of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act in 1901. This Act was passed in order to prevent the transfer of land to moneylenders. But critical to its import was its definition of social stability in colonial Punjab in terms of the maintenance of land within groups referred to in the Act as Punjab's hereditary 'agricultural tribes.' These were not, in fact, landholding units, but rather categories of local groups marked by their 'ancestral' control of land and their local political organization based on principles of patrilineal descent. Jats, Rajputs, Arains and other broadly construed 'tribes' were gazetted by name as agricultural tribes in the various districts of Punjab, not because they owned land as units, but because their social cohesion at the local level was believed to depend on both land control and patrilineal kinship organization. More than any previous action, the Land Alienation Act linked the stability of the colonial state explicitly to local kinship structures among Punjabi landholders. At the same time it delineated bureaucratically and fixed 'objectively' the categories that defined those structures. In practice, the Act mobilized the state bureaucracy to maintain the political importance of these units by limiting the passage of land to those who were not members of officially defined and gazetted 'agricultural tribes.'

¹⁰ For a discussion of the role of the British elaboration of customary law in limiting female inheritance rights, see David Gilmartin, 'Women, Kinship and Politics in 20th Century Punjab,' in Gail Minault, ed., *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Chanakya, 1981). The broader implications of this (and other related policies) for the position of women in the colonial social structure and economy are discussed by Michelle Maskiell, 'Gender, Kinship and Rural Work in Colonial Punjab,' *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990).

Like other, earlier administrative actions, the Act thus created a political framework in which the interests of landholders, as members of local patrilineal kinship structures, were recognized and systematized by the state. Just as the elaboration of customary law strengthened local patriarchal control over women, the Land Alienation Act strengthened the control of village landholders over village *kamins* and landless laborers. It served to bar *kamins*, who were in general not members of gazetted agricultural tribes, from acquiring village land. It also increased the leverage of small and large landowners alike with respect to non-agriculturalist moneylenders. Though the Land Alienation Act did not refer directly to *biradaris* (in Urdu the word ‘tribe’ was translated as *qaum*), it nevertheless provided the framework in which *biradari*, as a structure based on patrilineal kinship, came to be vitally implicated in the stability of the colonial state. Participation in local patrilineal kinship networks defined, in effect, the legitimate legal power of landed male household heads over their families and over their laborers, and empowered landholders as members of these groups to claim a privileged place in 20th-century Punjabi politics within the framework of the terms laid down by the Land Alienation Act. In the eyes of the British, stabilization of local kinship structures, stabilization of the agrarian political economy, and stabilization of the state went hand in hand.

But the growing political salience of the term, *biradari*, in particular, within the colonial political system lay also in a paradox. The importance of *biradari* in colonial politics arose not just from the efforts of the state to co-opt local kinship structures, but also, ironically, from the practical fact that among Punjabi kinship units, the *biradari* was the one perhaps most difficult for the state to appropriate fully. As a form of local political solidarity rooted primarily in transactional relationships rather than fixed genealogical calculation, it was not fully susceptible to ‘objective’ fixation and bureaucratic appropriation, whatever the state’s intentions. It is this which probably explains why the term *biradari* was not used in the Land Alienation Act, and, in general, was used far less commonly in referring to local ‘tribal’ solidarity in British administrative documents than the word *qaum*, a term suggesting a more readily identifiable

‘objective’ ethnic category.¹¹ Though *biradari* fit into the general structure of state reliance on local patrilineal kinship organization, it defined a form of local solidarity that remained, to an important degree, bound up in local networks of reciprocal obligation and social contestation. *Biradari* solidarity thus provided a vehicle for both accommodation and resistance by Punjabi villagers to the power of the increasingly bureaucratic colonial state, linking landholding organization to the state, but defining an arena of ongoing status and power negotiation and competition independent of direct state control.

Indeed, in spite of clear pre-colonial origins, the term *biradari* increasingly gained common political currency in the 20th century, reflecting the contradictions inherent in the structure of the colonial state. The British established an increasingly rationalized bureaucratic structure in Punjab that penetrated in important respects to the base of Punjabi society. Whether in the structure of property and family law, revenue collection, irrigation rules, politics, or the appropriation of indigenous kinship categories, by the late 19th century British bureaucratic rules had begun to impinge deeply on the everyday lives of Punjabi villagers. *Biradari*, however, represented a realm of reciprocal political and ritual transactions and relationships (tied to ‘blood’) that the ‘rational’ state bureaucracy could not fully penetrate. In this sense, *biradaris*, though rooted in ideologies and patterns long predating the colonial state, assumed a new political significance in the bureaucratic colonial political context.

¹¹ Though it is perhaps a mistake to lay too much stress on explicit state usage of these terms (or on the British usage of terms such as *zat* or *got* that were operationally shaped primarily by marriage prohibitions), the shades of their meanings provide clues to their political significance. *Biradari* defined most clearly among these terms a form of kin-based solidarity that could not be described or fixed genealogically without reference to the ongoing patterns of local transactions that transformed potential kin-based power into a local political reality. Interestingly, *qaum* seems to have been used as a term of administrative identification also by the Mughal bureaucracy. Whether the term *biradari* also appears in Mughal documents I do not know.

***Biradaris* and Electoral Representation**

Analyzing the detailed political workings and meaning of *biradari* in Punjabi electoral politics under the British remains difficult precisely because *biradari* was a category little discussed in administrative documents. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that *biradari* identity played an important role in the 20th century in shaping emerging political ties between the villages of Punjab and the larger electoral arena.

This was not, it must be emphasized, because local *biradari* politics created only kin-based village unity, thus producing ready-made, clearly identifiable, unified blocs of village support for political leaders seeking a popular base. To the contrary, even when dominated by a single ‘agricultural tribe,’ local village politics often were marked by considerable conflict between *biradaris* within the dominant ‘tribe’ in the village (and sometimes by conflict among households within individual village *biradaris* as well). The existence of an administratively defined village ‘community’ by no means assured internal political unity or, more importantly, unity in dealing with the outside.

The British discovered this in their efforts to implant formal institutions of village governance into Punjab villages. In spite of the vision of village solidarity that permeated much British administrative discussion of Punjab villages, attempts to establish elective representation in villages led to British hand-wringing over the level of conflict that this turned up. The experience of the British in attempting to establish elected, state-sanctioned *panchayats* in the 1920s illustrated this dramatically. In instituting *panchayats* on an experimental basis to handle certain kinds of judicial cases, British officials tried to find villages that were relatively homogeneous in terms of ‘tribe’ and without serious conflict. But as officials soon discovered, even in villages dominated by a single ‘tribe,’ internal differences along *biradari* lines were sometimes substantial. As one official noted of several Arain villages originally proposed for *panchayats* in Lyallpur District, they were, in practice, ‘honeycombed’ with internal conflicts and petty jealousies that would prevent *panchayats* from reflecting an effective sense of community. Among ‘*janglis*’ also in Lyallpur, this official wrote, elections for *panchayat* seats would inevitably produce deep divisions. ‘A

biradari of thieves will elect a thief,' he stated, 'who may upset the whole work and usefulness of the panchayats.'¹² This was of course not to suggest that villages with institutions of common purpose and solidarity were lacking in Punjab, but that the concept of unified village *biradaris* was in large part a myth that had been embraced by the British themselves.¹³

Critical to understanding the role of *biradari* in Punjab, however, is understanding that such internal conflicts did not foreclose the creation of structures linking villages to the larger political system drawing on *biradari* ideology. Indeed, internal conflict was itself critical, in many cases, in drawing Punjabi villagers into political relationships with those with power outside the village. If conflicts over status usually provided the foundations for longstanding intra-village conflicts over women, land or water (as many studies have shown), battles over local status were commonly redressed by alliances forged with those outside the village (police, irrigation officials, lawyers, nearby landlords, politicians, etc.) capable of providing leverage in local conflict. Such alliances could, of course, take many forms. They might be based simply on ad hoc payments in return for political support or favors, unconnected with ties of personal relationship. But often, appeals to real or presumed kinship bonds extending outside the village provided the foundation on which these relationships were constructed. Though 'tribal' bonds alone could not, in and of themselves, secure alliances (as internal village conflicts indicated), kinship provided a language of reciprocal obligation that allowed alliances outside the village to be more easily negotiated and carried through. Appeals to the language of *biradari* in these larger political contexts did not necessarily imply, of course, the formation of

¹² J.G. Beazly (Deputy Commissioner, Lyallpur) to Comm., Multan, 2 February 1924. Local Self-Government/Panchayats, Proceedings, No.s 112–35, September 1924. Punjab Archives, Lahore.

¹³ Interestingly, British officials often maintained this myth by declaring that there were special reasons why the villages in the area they were concerned with did not conform to the common model of village solidarity. Dispersal of settlement in southwestern Punjab and relatively recent migration and settlement in the canal colonies, for example, were often offered as reasons why villages in these parts of Punjab did not conform to what was still taken as a dominant, normative model of village solidarity.

solidarities with all the features of local *biradaris* (in terms of marriage relationships, ritual transactions, etc). But appeals to *biradari* did imply solidarities built on the transactional model of reciprocal obligation legitimized by *biradari* terminology. The language of *biradari*—suggesting reciprocal relationships forged through political transactions—thus allowed villagers and local village leaders to penetrate into the larger bureaucratic and political arenas outside the village, all the while maintaining the inner essence of their own struggles for status within the village context.¹⁴ The structure and ideology of British rule itself heightened the political salience of this *biradari* idiom within the new colonial electoral arena emerging in the 20th century. The first British-organized elections in rural Punjab were for seats on District Boards, the constituencies for which normally were administrative divisions marked out in the 19th century largely in order to encapsulate (in so far as possible) ‘tribal’ divisions of the population (*zails*). District Board ‘representatives’ in many early elections were *zaildars*, men appointed as rural officials (and thus ‘fixed’ as local representatives) by the British. But in the 20th century, as elections to these Boards were expanded, conflict over ‘representation’ increasingly required the mobilization of local support, and appeals to *biradari* helped cement alliances between District Board representatives and village leaders based on mutual interest. At the same time, blocs based on *biradari* solidarity were activated by alliances among elected leaders on District Boards; indeed, the idiom of common kinship legitimized ‘tribal’ blocs that often were dominated by leaders who used the leverage derived from *biradari* support and from the patronage available on District

¹⁴ In analyzing this system, some have stressed its essentially segmentary character; genealogical segments that are in conflict on the local level will nevertheless unite on the basis of common ancestry at wider levels to oppose a common foe. ‘As in tribal regions,’ Charles Lindholm has written, ‘*baradaris* tend to line up against one another on a segmentary basis.’ Charles Lindholm, ‘The Segmentary Lineage System: Its Applicability to Pakistan’s Political Structure,’ in Ainslee T. Embree, ed., *Pakistan’s Western Borderlands* (Delhi: Vikas, 1977) p. 53. This captures an important dynamic in the system. But it overstates, I think, the importance of precise genealogical reckoning in the process and understates the importance of political transactions in shaping patterns of political *biradari* formation and alliance.

Boards to build powerful connections.¹⁵ Some British officials were worried that this would tend to disintegrate their system of social control, particularly in those western Punjab areas where landlords were strong, stirring up 'factions' in local politics and undercutting the ability of the British to co-opt 'tribal' categories and 'fix' local 'tribal' leaders themselves.¹⁶ Critically, however, elections tended in most areas only to transform the nature of the 'tribal' bonds that already linked leaders to the colonial system, transmutating relatively fixed 'tribal' representation into the more fluid idiom of *biradari* leadership, rather than undercutting the colonial altogether system.

This was evident in the emerging electoral arenas of provincial politics, where political parties also had begun to emerge by the 1920s as important players in colonial politics. In theory, of course, parties, with their potential for political programs, organizations and ideologies, offered potential alternatives to *biradari* as focuses for extra-local political loyalties. In practice, however, the role of *biradari* and 'tribalism' was stabilized by the emergence of the Unionist Party by the 1930s as the overwhelmingly dominant focus for the adherence of rural Muslim Punjabi leaders. Central to the party were its attempts to transform British administrative reliance on 'tribal' identities at the local level into an ideology of provincial solidarity. Using the support of the Land Alienation Act and its definition of 'agricultural tribes' as the key to its ideology, the provincial leaders of the Unionist Party cast the Party as the defender of the interests of the zamindars, the members of the 'agricultural tribes,' at the provincial level. Of course, the Party represented largely the interests of dominant local landholders, its leadership filled with relatively wealthy landlords. But it offered an ideology of political affiliation at the provincial level that was integrated with and

¹⁵ Evidence on local district board politics before partition is limited. One example of such a bloc comes from Lahore District. There, as the Senior Vice-Chairman of the Lahore District Board, Muhammad Sharif, noted in 1939, Arains made up seven of the 15 Muslims on the District Board at that time. Six of the seven acted together as part of a group under Muhammad Sharif's leadership. Muhammad Sharif to Syed Afzaal Ali Hasnie, Unionist Headquarters, 31 July 1939. Unionist Party Papers, File G-45.

¹⁶ Note by Olaf Caroe, 10 December 1921. Local Self-Government/Boards, Proceedings No.s 28–30, August 1923. Punjab Archives, Lahore.

protective of the operation of *biradari* politics at the local level. It thus integrated the transactional politics of local *biradari* alliances with adhesion to a provincial political party that protected local power.

The nature of this process emerges most clearly in the political jockeying accompanying elections for the Punjab Legislative Assembly established after the reforms of 1935. Though constituencies for the provincial Legislative Council were geographically quite wide in the period from 1920 through 1935, the reformed Legislative Assembly after 1937, based on a broader franchise, drew representatives from narrower geographical constituencies (usually *tahsils*) which, like District Board elections, gave considerable scope for 'tribal' representation. Calculations by provincial political leaders on candidacies for the 1937 elections often hinged on the 'tribal' distribution of voters in each area. The correspondence of the Unionist Party, for example, is filled with assessments of 'tribal' strength in various constituencies. But the enumeration of the voting strength of various 'tribes' did not by itself prefigure the role that *biradari* would play in shaping voting.¹⁷ The common pattern in 1936 and 1937 was not for the Unionist Party (or other parties) simply to pick a candidate from a dominant 'tribe' in a constituency and expect kin-based solidarity to carry the day, but rather for various candidates from important 'tribes' (often many from the same 'tribe') to file for candidacy and then participate in a process of bargaining, with both party officials and local leaders, leading to negotiated withdrawals from the race. Though the role of the party leadership in this process was sometimes shadowy, the effect of this was to activate *biradari* idioms as representatives established transactional bonds linking them to allies and their followings, sometimes through the arbitration of provincial party leadership (and the awarding of party tickets).

¹⁷ Interestingly, calculations of 'tribal' voters in correspondence were sometimes combined with discussions of the marriage connections among leading families and of the ongoing alliances and enmities of the leading men of the various 'tribes' in the constituencies. These were critical to any mobilization on the basis of *biradari*. For one example (from 1945), see handwritten notes on Unionist election prospects in Gujranwala District. Unionist Party Papers, file D-24.

Examples exist not only in political correspondence but also in election petitions filed after the elections. A letter to Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Unionist Party leader, for example, details some of the negotiations preceding the selection of candidates in 1936 for the Jullundur South (Muhammadan) Assembly seat, a constituency with a large Arain population. In that case, Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz, an Arain of the prominent Baghbanpura Mian family of Lahore, sought to win the Unionist ticket for the seat by convincing provincial Unionist leaders of his strong Arain support in the constituency and, at the same time, convincing local Arains of his strong support from provincial Unionist leaders. Shah Nawaz wrote to Sikander as the deadline for withdrawals approached explaining, that he, another Arain, Chaudhri Abdur Rabb (with weak ties to the Unionists), and another pro-Unionist, non-Arain had filed for the seat. If the non-Arain candidate did not withdraw, he wrote, then the ‘Arain *biradari* will decide between me and Chaudhri Abdur Rabb.’ Urging Sir Sikander therefore to use his influence to secure this withdrawal so that the Arain *biradari* would not end up opposing the Unionists, he added that ‘the many *zaildars* and *nambardars* [village headmen] of *ilaqas* Nakodar and Phillaur’ had made it clear to him that if he could secure the withdrawal of the non-Arain, then they would urge Chaudhri Abdur Rabb’s withdrawal as well, so that a pro-Unionist Arain would be elected. Otherwise, he said, on 27 December 1936 ‘the *biradari*,’ apparently meaning the Arain *zaildars*, *nambardars* and leading men in the constituency, will meet to choose which of the Arains would oppose the non-Arain candidate. Sikander’s response to this is not recorded, but the result of the election is: a victory for Chaudhri Abdur Rabb. The means by which Chaudhri Abdur Rabb won the support of the leading local Arains over Shah Nawaz remains unclear. His close connections to the constituency probably carried the day once Shah Nawaz’s failure to sway the provincial leadership was evident. But in spite of—or, more accurately, because of—the prominence of the *biradari* idiom in the political negotiations, his ability to win the solid support of Arain voters came only after the bargaining through which a range of local Arain leaders were brought to his political support.¹⁸

¹⁸ Muhammad Shah Nawaz to Sikander Hyat Khan, 25 December 1936. Khurshid Ali Khan Papers, Lahore.

The importance of negotiated withdrawals is suggested also by the negotiations preceding the election in the South-East Gujrat (Muhammadan) constituency. In that constituency, seven candidates originally filed in 1936: four Jats, one Gujjar, and two others. Two of the Jat candidates withdrew in favor of another, 'after a meeting of prominent members of the Jat brotherhood was held at the house of Ghulam Rasul [one of those who withdrew] on the 1st of December, 1936, to decide which of the Jat candidates should receive their support.' The fourth Jat contested anyway but was defeated. The nature of the negotiations involved in these withdrawals is not completely clear, but charges were made, ultimately rejected by an Elections Tribunal, that the victorious candidate illegally paid a sum of Rs. 500 to one of the other candidates to withdraw. More substantive, was the evidence presented in an election petition that Nawab Fazal Ali, a Gujjar, Chairman of the Gujrat District Board, exercised his own influence to secure the endorsement of the Jat *biradari* meeting for the winning candidate, using, in part, his influence over District Board contracts. He also secured the withdrawal of the sole Gujjar candidate so that the election of the victorious Jat, his political ally, would be assured. Though Jats clearly remained politically divided in the constituency, *biradari* relationships nevertheless played an important part in the election. Here again, as in many other constituencies, *biradari* influence was mobilized only through a complex series of political transactions in which the roles of patronage and clientage were critical, involving powerful men operating within the arenas of power established by the colonial state in the constituency.¹⁹

Such examples suggest both the importance and the complex role of *biradari* idioms in linking local leaders to the new arenas of power that had been established within the colonial Punjab as a system of elected bodies was introduced. The key to the significance of *biradari* lay precisely in the shifting referents of the term. It was not employed as a term defining a fixed genealogical construct, but rather one that shifted with the political context, thus facilitating adaptation to the political structure of the colonial system. While linking

¹⁹ Report of the First Election Petitions Commission, Punjab; Chaudhri Bahawal Bakhsh vs. Khan Sahib Pir Muhammad; South-East Gujrat Muhammadan Constituency. *Punjab Gazette*, 22 October 1937, part I, pp. 1429–37.

politicians to a language legitimized both by kinship and by the structure of the colonial administration, it nevertheless created a language of solidarity in the contestation for political power that was outside the direct control of the bureaucratic colonial administration. And it created a language in which new transactional political links could be forged between leaders at different levels of the political system, even as they engaged in local political struggles, sometimes even with their own ‘tribesmen,’ to secure a voice within the political system.

***Biradari* Associations and Colonial Politics**

Still, the very fluidity of *biradari* in contexts such as these created tensions in the formal expression of *biradari* identity. The appeal of *biradari* as a form of solidarity beyond the direct realm of bureaucratic control had long found another kind of expression in colonial Punjab, one rooted not primarily in electoral transactions but in the politics of social reform and self-assertion emanating from Punjab’s cities. As early as the later 19th century, Punjab had witnessed the emergence of a number of formal ‘tribal’ associations, or *anjumans*. These drew on *biradari* identity in ways different from ad hoc electoral alliances— and yet ways in which the term *biradari* remained highly salient. Many of these *anjumans* attempted, like the British, to fix ‘tribal’ identity, embodying it in formal organization. But unlike the British, they tended to view ‘tribal’ identity not just in terms of fixed bureaucratic definition and enumeration, but in terms of personal, inner, individual identities activated by education, reform and association. For most of them, the interaction of kinship solidarities with the emerging public worlds of Punjab’s cities thus shaped a distinctive idiom of *biradari* identity. This idiom was sometimes in tension with the ad hoc manipulation of *biradari* by local political leaders, but it nevertheless shared with the transactional politics of local *biradari* solidarities an appeal to kinship ideology as the locus for a fluid non-bureaucratic identity.

Numerous *biradari* associations existed in 20th-century Punjab, though they differed in their antecedents. The most powerful model for this form of organization in Punjab was the Jat Mahasabha, associated in Punjab politics largely with the name of Sir Chhotu Ram. This predominantly Hindu organization had its roots among Hindu Jat

lawyers and landowners in Rohtak District, most of them deeply influenced by Hindu religious reform movements, particularly the Arya Samaj. Though it had relatively little direct impact on Muslims, the organization illustrated how new forms of formal *biradari* association, linking personal education and political mobilization, had begun to define new conceptions of *biradari* politics among educated Punjabis in the early 20th century. Chhotu Ram, who, along with his law partner and sometime factional rival, Lal Chand, came to dominate Jat politics in Rohtak by the early 1920s, was educated at D.A.V. College, Lahore, and was a strong believer in Arya educational efforts. Drawing on this tradition, he viewed the education of Jats as critical to their uplift and mobilization.²⁰

Politically, however, he appealed directly to a new, ideological form of ‘biradarism,’ as one critic put it,²¹ or ‘Jatism’ (both on the public platform and in his newspaper, the *Jat Gazette*), to mobilize in his support a relatively well-off segment of Jat farmers and professionals, imbued with a new self-conscious sense of personal Jat identity and Jat interests. Even as Chhotu Ram used the structure of British colonial control in Punjab, with its emphasis on ‘tribalism’ and on the special position of the ‘agricultural tribes,’ to carve out a place for himself in provincial politics,—he thus also tapped into a new, self-consciously political form of *biradari* identity cultivated in arenas outside the direct realms of British bureaucratic control.

Chhotu Ram used this strategy effectively to take an increasingly prominent place on the stage of provincial politics in the years after 1919. In linking Jat mobilization to the pro-zamindar ideology of the Unionist Party, he emerged in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s as the leading spokesman for the interests of Punjab’s ‘agricultural tribes’—and as one of the most powerful politicians in the Punjab. His career dramatized how the championing of a particular *biradari* identity could be linked to the larger ideology of Unionist Party domination at the provincial level. He thus served as a model for many rural Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs, eventually drawing many Muslim and Sikh Jats, as well as Hindus, onto the Jat Mahasabha platform at the provincial level. In the 1940s, for example, Muslim and Sikh Jats were given

²⁰ Prem Chowdhry, *Punjab Politics: the Role of Sir Chhotu Ram* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984) pp. 46–47.

²¹ Prem Chowdhry, *Punjab Politics*, p. 62.

prominent roles at Jat meetings to dramatize (for Unionist political reasons) the ‘non-communal’ character of Jat organization.²² Still, the Arya roots of the Jat Mahasabha never entirely disappeared. As an expression of individual Jat identity, the Jat Mahasabha’s strongest appeal was to those Hindu Jats for whom formal Jat *biradari* organization was intertwined with a transformed personal identity tied to social uplift, education, and Hindu religious reform.

More important for many of Punjab’s Muslims, were those *biradari* associations among Muslim ‘tribes,’ such as the Gujjars, Awans and Arains, that linked Muslim *biradari* identity with Islamic reform and education in defining new forms of self-assertion comparable to those of the Jat Mahasabha. Perhaps the most important and influential of these was the *anjuman* of the Arains. Arains in Punjab were predominantly small-holding agriculturalists, concentrated in a few central Punjab districts (particularly Jullundur and Lahore), and in Punjab’s canal colonies. But even though Arains were a largely rural community, the history of the Arain *anjuman* was influenced strongly by their urban presence in Punjab, particularly in Lahore, and by the concerns of an emerging educated Arain elite, composed largely of professional Arains, urban *rais*, and a few prominent landlord families. The history of the Arain *anjuman* can, in fact, be taken as an extended example of the development of formal *biradari* organization among Punjab’s Muslim ‘tribes,’ and the tensions it produced.

The first movements toward formal Arain organization in colonial Punjab began in the 1890s, when, encouraged in part by Arain students, a group of leading Arain *rais*, lawyers and retired civil servants met in Jullundur and Lahore, to encourage Arain organization and to stress the importance of reforming many popular Arain social customs. Such concerns became yet more explicit when another group of prominent Arains—dominated by urban *rais* such as the Baghbanpura Mians—met at Lahore in 1915 to launch formally the Anjuman Ra’iyan-i Hind (or the All-India Arain Conference), and subsequently established a weekly Arain newspaper, *Al-Rai*, and an

²² At the all-India Jat Conference in Delhi in December 1942, for example, Chhotu Ram proclaimed the ‘inter-communal’ character of the organization with prominent Jat Unionist allies, including Sir Jogendra Singh and Sir Shahab-ud-din, on the platform. *Eastern Times* (Lahore), 1 December 1942.

Arain meeting house in Lahore. A British army directive that Arains, as hereditary market gardeners, should not be recruited by the colonial army prompted the launching of the *anjuman*. Leaders of the new *anjuman* responded to the army by stressing the numerical importance of Arains in Punjab, arguing that the numbers of Arains holding appointed positions in the rural administration and in the colonial bureaucracy alone justified British recognition of their status and significance. Responding to the ‘tribal’ idioms encouraged by the British, the *anjuman* argued that Arains as a group deserved greater recognition—and higher status—within the colonial system.²³

But while reflecting the educated urban background of most of the *anjuman*’s early leaders, the rhetoric of the *anjuman* reflected also a concern to ground individual Arain *biradari* identity in a realm at least partially outside the bureaucratic structure of British colonial power—in the pure, inner Muslim nature of Arains that was rooted in the tribe’s genealogical links to Arabia. The Arains, the *anjuman* argued, were descended from the Arab soldiers who had first come to Sind with Muhammad bin Qasim in the 8th century. They were thus descended not of the Prophet, like the Saiyyids, but from the common Arab man who had brought Islam to the subcontinent. The inner identity of Arains was suggested, the *anjuman* declared, by the fact that most had ‘pure Arabic names,’ and that ‘their marriage and funeral rites evince the simple characteristics of the Arabs.’²⁴ The point of formal *biradari* organization therefore was not simply to pressure the government in the name of Arain political and economic interests, but to assert publicly what, for the leaders of the *anjuman*, being a good Arain—and a good Muslim—meant.

To realize the full meaning of Arain identity and to bring outward Arain behavior into conformity with their inner nature, reform,

²³ Ali Asghar Chaudhri, *Tarikh-i Ara’iyan* (Lahore: Ilmi Kitabkhana, 1973) pp. 168–69, 184. See also, ‘Petition of Arains to Lord Kitchener’ (1915), Mian Abdul Aziz Collection, Lahore.

²⁴ ‘Petition of Arains to Lord Kitchener’ (1915). This, of course, probably referred less to existing Arain practice than to an Arain ideal. Since many of the early speeches at Arain meetings were directed toward reforming common Arain customs, we can assume that most did not measure up to this. See, for example, Ali Asghar Chaudhri, *Tarikh-i Ara’iyan*, p. 184.

education and personal transformation were therefore essential. For urban professionals and educated zamindars in particular, formal *biradari* organization thus provided a vehicle not only for political organizing and pressuring the government, but also for establishing personal identities (and for the internalization of claims to high social status) commensurate with their new positions in British professional and public life.²⁵ In this, they reflected clearly the paradoxes of *biradari* identity. On the one hand, formal *biradari* organization offered a frame for the outward assertion in provincial politics of the critical importance of ‘tribal’ solidarity. But, on the other hand, it also allowed *biradari* leaders to resist full encapsulation into the bureaucratic framework of the British, even while asserting their claims to provincial power based on ties of ‘blood’. This, of course, suggests the continuing fluidity of the *biradari* idiom, even when deployed at the provincial level, as both a vehicle for accommodation and resistance to the colonial state.

Still, for this very reason, Arain *biradari* organization at the provincial level generated substantial contradictions. If formal *biradari* organization was linked to the assertion of autonomous, individualized identities, its manipulation in local politics threatened at times to compromise these identities. Rural *biradari* politics, particularly when mobilized in support of those powerfully placed in the ‘tribal’ structure of the colonial administration, often seemed to undercut the vision of individual reform that had guided the founders of the Arain *anjuman*. Uncertainties surrounding the public use of *biradari* rhetoric in these years suggested this clearly. What, after all, as Sardar Muhammad Shafi of Ganja Kalan, *rais* and zamindar of Lahore District, asked in a presidential address to the All-India Arain Conference in the 1940s, was the real ‘purpose of *biradari* organization’ in Punjab’s politics? If

²⁵ See, for example, the reported comments of Mian Muhammad Shafi of Baghbanpura, a Lahore lawyer and one of the leaders in early Arain organization, to a suggestion from another family member that he try to raise the family’s status by asserting Rajput or Saiyyid status. ‘He was proud to be an Arain of Arab origin,’ Shafi declared. ‘And, God willing, before he died the tribe would be so well organized that people would clamor to be known as Arains.’ Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter: A Political Autobiography* (Lahore: Nigarishat, 1971) p. 23.

the goal of provincial *biradari* organization was simply to mobilize politically for competition with other *biradaris*, Shafi said, then its effects could only be problematic. Indeed, Shafi expressed the fear that *biradari* organization could easily become nothing more than a new form of *asabiyyat*, or ‘tribal feeling,’ the sort of tribal feeling that had characterized society in the era of ignorance before the time of the Prophet. Long residence in Hindu India and, more recently, the colonial policies of the British, he noted, had in fact encouraged such tribalism, and the goal of the Arain *anjuman*, ought never to be to perpetuate these feelings. Rather, a public emphasis on *biradari* identity was justifiable only if it could transcend ‘tribalism.’ To focus in this context on the cultural power of descent and ‘blood’ ought simply to be a mechanism, he therefore argued, by which Arains could encourage exemplary inner religious belief and popular practice in ways that would serve as a model for the whole community, much as a particularly *sharif* family could serve as a guide for an entire clan. In this way the Arain *anjuman* could set an example for all of Punjab, using the idiom of *biradari* solidarity as a weapon to free the people of Punjab from colonial domination.²⁶

But *anjuman* organization and the ‘tribalism’ of local political competition were in practice, extremely difficult to separate, particularly when it came to mobilizing support in local elections. Whatever their ideals, few Arain leaders could resist the appeal of the *biradari* idiom as a foundation for negotiating their way onto the provincial political stage, much in the way that Chhotu Ram had appealed to Jat *biradari* solidarity for a similar purpose. In the period immediately before the 1937 elections, *anjuman* leaders of the All-India Arain Conference (from six Punjab districts) thus met in Lahore and constituted an Arain Parliamentary Board whose aim, as the then president of the Conference, Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz of Baghbanpura put it, was to encourage ‘Arain cohesion and

²⁶ Speech of Sardar Muhammad Shafi, *rais* of Ganja Kalan, at All-India Arain Conference, Jalalabad (Bijnor District, United Provinces), March 1947. Ali Asghar Chaudhri, *Tarikh-i Ara'iyan*, pp. 172–73. In a similar vein, the importance of lineage (*hisb o nishb*) in defining *sharafat* is also stressed at the very opening of the first important published history of the Arains; Maulvi Muhammad Akbar Ali Sufi (Jalandhri), *Salim al-Tawarikh; yani Tarikh-i Qaum-i Ara'iyan* (Amritsar, 1919) pp. 1–7.

cooperation in the coming elections.’ He specifically asked leading Arains to present the names of Arains likely to run in their constituencies and to discuss, if more than one were running, how a reconciliation was to be brought about.²⁷ Invitations subsequently went out to the leading ‘*buzurgan-i qaum*’ (loosely, ‘elders,’ or respected men in the community) to meet in Lahore for ‘mutual consultations’ on the elections. The aim was to prepare the ground for Arains elected in the Assembly to form a united front so that their leaders could exercise maximum influence on the new Ministry in the name of *biradari* solidarity.²⁸

But the difficulties proved substantial, largely because provincial Arain leaders were unable to control all the local transactional negotiations that gave real meaning to the *biradari* idiom in the localities. Local Arain landowners, officials, and elders often had far different concerns from those of the largely educated leaders of the Arain *anjuman*, and used the *biradari* idiom in very different ways. In the end, few local Arain leaders were thus willing to trust the conduct of these negotiations, and the withdrawals of candidatures that were so critical to local representation, to a formal Arain Parliamentary Board composed of educated provincial leaders. Indeed, the idea of formal *biradari* organization in some ways seemed to undercut the very power of the *biradari* idiom as a legitimizer of the

²⁷ Notes by Unionist Party Resident Secretary Afzaal Ali Hasnie, dated 25 April 1936 and 8 May? 1936 (Unionist Party Papers, files marked E-23 and Mian Nurullah’s case).

²⁸ Circular letters from Muhammad Abdul Majid, Secretary, Arain Parliamentary Board, dated 12 June and 19 June (Mian Abdul Aziz Collection, Lahore) to prominent Arains, the first inviting the *biradari ke buzurgan* from Lahore Tahsil to meet at Nawankot to consult on the selection of a candidate, the second inviting 200 Arain leaders from all over the province to come to Lahore to discuss the elections. Much of this correspondence also implicitly suggests the degree to which the *anjuman* was dominated at this time by a few prominent families, notably the Baghbanpura Mians. Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz, President of the Arain Conference, and Muhammad Abdul Majid, Secretary of the Arain Parliamentary Board, both belonged to this family. It is not a surprise, in this light, that it was Muhammad Abdul Majid himself who ended up running for the Lahore Tahsil seat after calling for a meeting of the Arain Parliamentary Board to select an Arain candidate for the constituency.

transactional—and often largely local—political alliances that shaped election contests.²⁹ The role of the Arain *anjuman* in the political electoral processes thus remained highly ambiguous.

Perhaps most telling however, were the questions raised about the proper role of the *anjuman* in Punjabi politics following the 1937 elections, when the new provincial Unionist Ministry assumed power.

However important the Arain *biradari* idiom in some legislative elections, the Arain *anjuman*'s direct influence in the elections had proved minimal. But its leaders nevertheless continued to try to make claims to influence in provincial politics in the name of a *biradari* constituency. That these efforts increasingly proved divisive was hardly a surprise, and some elected Arains in the Assembly now began to express resentment at the politicization of *anjuman* activities. In the aftermath of the elections, some called on the *anjuman* to eschew politics and to re-stress the principles that originally motivated its founding. This led to the formation within the *anjuman* in late 1937 of an *Islahi* (Reform) Committee to regularize the *anjuman*'s constitution, register it officially under British Indian corporation law, and create an official category of three rupee members who alone could vote for officers.³⁰ The intent, for the reformers, was to separate the provincial *anjuman*'s organization from local political negotiations focusing on *biradari* identity, which threatened only to compromise their own political influence.

But, in spite of such reform efforts, the more general problems of defining the *anjuman*'s purposes were kept fresh in the minds of Arain leaders by the continuing machinations of leading Arain politicians in provincial affairs (in league with various political parties) in the

²⁹ There were bitter recriminations in 1936 over Arains joining various political parties in violation of erstwhile pledges of unity given to the Arain Parliamentary Board. In the end, the Arain Parliamentary Board endorsed the Unionists. *Tribune* (Lahore), 12 November 1936. For a discussion of the unsuccessful Arain Conference efforts to pressure the Unionist Ministry to appoint an Arain minister after the elections, see David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) p. 94.

³⁰ Letter from the 'Daftar-i Anjuman Ra'iyān-i Hind, Lahore' to Friends of the Qaum, n.d. (1937?), signed by Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, MLA; Mian Abdur Rashid, Judge, High Court; Malik Din Muhammad, Hon'y Gen. Sec.; Mian Abdul Aziz, MLA; and Chaudhri Ghulam Haidar Umar, Asst. Gen. Sec. (Mian Abdul Aziz Collection, Lahore).

subsequent years. The well-publicized break of several Arain MLAs with the Unionist Party in January 1939, produced a wave of criticism of the role of 'biradarism' in Punjab politics, and considerable soulsearching about the appropriate political role for *biradari* organization. This was evident in an impassioned editorial on the 'Arain *Biradari* and Politics' published in the pages of the Arain weekly, *Al-Rai*. Though the Arain *anjuman* was founded 'on the reform of the *millat*, the protection of the rights of Muslims, the progress of education, Islamic publicity and the regulations of the *shariat*,' *Al-Rai* wrote, the *anjuman* was now being accused of improperly interfering in politics. But the relationship between politics and the advance of the *biradari* was in fact complex. 'From one side,' the paper editorialized, 'it continues to be said that in Islam, religion and politics cannot be separated.' But, 'on the other side, it is decided that for the Anjuman Ra'iyān-i Hind, politics is the forbidden tree.' How, the paper asked, could the *anjuman* play a role in defining for individual Arains a place of exemplary leadership among Muslims while at the same time remaining apart from politics? 'When it comes to the organization of the Arains for the protection of their rights, then surely they must be united so that they become a model for the unity of all Muslims.'³¹

At the heart of the uncertainty about the political role of *biradari*, however, lay the relationship between personal identity—and autonomy—and the system of kinship solidarity that was central to the colonial state system of the British Raj. At the local level, the idiom of *biradari* provided a foundation for the alliances that allowed many Muslims—including Arains—to cope with the power of the colonial bureaucracy over their lives. It not only facilitated the creation of transactional political networks linking villagers with the structure of the state, but it did so with a language of reciprocity, in a realm of 'blood,' that bureaucratic principles could never fully control. At the provincial level, the founding of the *anjuman* shaped also the identities of many prominent, educated Arains, for whom support of the *anjuman* defined an inner identity, one rooted in the linking of commitment to pure Islamic principles with the power of 'blood.' At the provincial and public level, however, the political operation of the Arain *anjuman* in a world of bureaucratically-defined 'tribes' also

³¹ *Al-Rai* (Lahore), 14 February 1939.

defined the selfconscious participation by Arain leaders in the structure of colonial control devised by the British. To play formally the game of 'tribal' politics, orchestrating Arain participation in structures 'fixed' by the British was, in the eyes of many, not to resist bureaucratic domination but to compromise with the colonial system completely.

These contradictions in Muslim *biradari* politics for the Arains and other communities came even more clearly into focus in the political catharsis leading to the creation of Pakistan. In calling during the 1940s, for the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim League attacked the basic ideological foundations of the colonial state, seeking to define foundations for the state that rested not on the state's 'scientific' ordering of indigenous communities, but on the establishment of new symbolic links to the Muslim community as a whole. 'Tribal' politics were a product, League leaders now argued, of the colonial political system of the British, and they thus threatened to undercut the symbolic unity of the Islamic community. 'To achieve complete inner unity it is necessary,' wrote the pro-Muslim League *Eastern Times*, 'that all caste and tribal consciousness should be killed and effaced, until none is left who shall say "I am a Pathan" or "I am a Rajput" or "I am an Arain."' ³² In practice, of course, Muslim League leaders by no means ignored local *biradari* considerations in organizing for the elections of 1946. *Biradari* concerns guided the selection of many Muslim League candidates, for *biradari* politics remained central in many areas to patterns of local electoral alliance. But at the provincial level the Muslim League saw no place for *biradari* politics, and attacked directly many of the provincial 'tribal' *anjumans*, particularly those with ties to the Unionist Party. In such circumstances, the leaders of the Arain *anjuman* found little scope to offer the *biradari* as a model for the community. Though the Anjuman Ra'iyān-i Hind endorsed the Muslim League in October 1945, *Al-Rai* bemoaned the increasing apathy that characterized the *anjuman's* activities. ³³ The irony was that at the pinnacle of public enthusiasm and popular

³² *Eastern Times* (Lahore), 13 October 1943.

³³ 'Proceedings of the Managing Committee of the Anjuman Ra'iyān-i Hind, 28 October 1945,' and editorial, 'To What Extent will this Apathy Go?' *Al-Rai*, 8 December 1945.

mobilization in colonial Muslim politics in the years before partition, the Arain *anjuman* found itself relegated to virtual irrelevance.

Indeed, the *anjuman*'s problems on the eve of Pakistan reflected the contradictions long inherent in formal *biradari* organization. As *Al-Rai* had written metaphorically of colonial *biradari* politics:

God is our witness that we are involved in the crime of love, If it is a crime, then God will not forgive us.³⁴

Though *biradari* identity was for many, like love, an inner reality, a mark of the autonomy of the individual heart, the formal embrace of it in the public realms of state politics was indeed a kind of 'crime,' a display of sectional self-interest that could not be tolerated when the definition of the larger community as a whole was at risk.

Conclusion: Pakistan and *Biradaris*

The creation of Pakistan as a new state, of course, changed somewhat the dynamics of *biradari* politics among Muslim Punjabis. On one level, *biradari* identities remained central to the formation of local political networks and alliances, accommodating the shifting patterns of patronage and political transactions that shaped local political configurations. Indeed, in some respects the increasing bureaucratization of power in Pakistan following the British departure only increased the salience of *biradari* as an idiom simultaneously of local accommodation and resistance to the state structure. Kinship provided a powerful non-bureaucratic idiom for the articulation of local bonds of political reciprocity and alliance, whatever their material bases. Though local *biradari* politics might sometimes pose a threat to development schemes,³⁵ this was but a small price for the bureaucratic state to pay for the structure of accommodation that *biradari* politics allowed between Punjabi villagers and the state

³⁴ *Al-Rai*, 14 February 1939.

³⁵ Douglas Merrey provides dramatic examples of how local *biradari* conflicts (and other local conflicts of various sorts) disrupted both irrigation development and land consolidation in a western Punjab village in the 1970s. Douglas Merrey, 'Irrigation, Poverty and Social Change in a Village of Pakistani Punjab,' pp. 627–728.

bureaucratic structure as a whole. Indeed, in a world of inequalities, poverty, and bureaucratic power (and ‘corruption’), the appeal of *biradari* as an idiom of protection rooted not in bureaucratic rules but in the inner power of ‘blood,’ held a pervasive appeal, often legitimizing reciprocal political obligations between patrons and followers in rural Punjab, even as it played an important role in legitimizing blatant material inequalities.

But after partition the role and meaning of *biradari* within the political and ideological structure of the state also changed markedly in Punjab. While the British colonial state had mobilized and protected ‘tribal’ identities, ‘fixing’ them in scientific and bureaucratic language to serve the interests of the state, the Pakistani state officially rejected state protection of ‘tribal’ identities. To the contrary, the new state saw itself as the expression of a Muslim community that supplanted all localized identities. For ideological reasons, the new government in the late 1940s thus repealed the provisions of the Land Alienation Act mandating the protection of land in the hands of the ‘agricultural tribes,’ and officially replaced the Punjab customary law in matters of personal and family law with the *shariat*.³⁶ The new state structure thus left little scope for the continuing operation of a political party such as the Unionists that had ideologically linked an appeal to ‘zamindar’ solidarity at the provincial level to a political base resting

³⁶ The system of customary law was transformed officially by a West Punjab statute in 1948 (though this did not in practice end the application of customary law in all rural inheritance and family cases). The transformation of the Land Alienation Act was a bit more complex. Witnesses before an official committee formed to examine the Act argued strongly the ‘fundamentally unIslamic’ character of the law, whose continuance was inappropriate now that Pakistan had been created. As Begum Shah Nawaz (another member of the prominent Arain Baghbanpura Mian family) noted, the customary law and Land Alienation Act were alike in being part of a British structure of authority created to encourage divisions and rivalries among Punjabis. They stood in the way, she said, ‘of the full application of the personal law of the *shariat*.’ *Report of the Alienation of Land Inquiry Committee*, West Punjab, 1949 (Lahore: Government Printing, 1949). But the Land Alienation Act was not wholly repealed, as the protection of land in the hands of Punjab’s farmers was thought to be critical to the prosperity of the province. Nevertheless, ‘tribal’ definitions (with a few minor exceptions) were expunged from the Act.

on patronage structures and 'tribal' ideology in the localities. Indeed, *biradari* politics were bitterly condemned in Pakistan's early years simply as remnants of the colonial regime. Though formal *biradari anjumans* thus continued to attract support in much of Punjab after 1947, even expanding in many cases their numbers and their local branches as urbanization, the growth of small towns, and the integration of east Punjabi refugees progressed, they seem to have operated increasingly on the provincial level as little more than associations of social reform and arenas for individual status definition.³⁷ Efforts to involve them in politics, such as had characterized the 1920s and 1930s, largely disappeared.

But if the legitimate incorporation of *biradari* politics into the structure of the state was now largely foreclosed, new political parties did little to establish new bonds linking the organization of society to the principles of the state. The Muslim League itself, in spite of its ideological appeal to Islam, failed to develop in the years after 1947 into a political party that could aggregate the interests of the Muslim community as a whole by linking local politics to the principles defining the arenas of state authority. Nor did other parties perform this function in the years leading up to the 1958 establishment of military rule. Only with the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's People's Party in the late 1960s, did this begin to change. Then there emerged a significant party structure in Punjab that promised to integrate into state politics the *class* interests of a wide range of both new social groups and old ones newly politicized in the wake of the economic transformations of the Ayub Khan era. Historians may debate the degree to which the People's Party represented the real dawn of 'mass politics' in the Punjab. But there is little doubt that in the election campaign of 1970, the People's Party established ideological and institutional links to voters in many parts of Punjab that bound them to

³⁷ This is largely speculative, as I have collected little information of the development of these *anjumans* after partition. But for some indication of these trends in urban *biradari* politics, see Philip E. Jones, 'Changing Party Structures in Pakistan: From Muslim League to People's Party,' in Manzooruddin Ahmed, ed., *Contemporary Pakistan: Politics, Economy and Society* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1980) p. 121. In the cities, *biradari* organizations probably continued to play roles in the political connections developed by some prominent urban politicians.

the state in new ways, and even opened the possibility of new structures of party government that could exert political control in the name of a broader political community over the bureaucracy. This is not to say that the People's Party ignored entirely the old politics of *biradari* and patronage as it prepared to fight the 1970 elections, any more than had the Muslim League in the elections of 1946.³⁸ But the Party aimed clearly to subordinate such local structures to the development of a more broadly based party organization, a structure that could marginalize the local political power of local *biradari* and patronage ties, even as it exerted new forms of organized political party control over the bureaucracy.

For whatever reasons, however, the promise of the People's Party failed to materialize. The movement of the Party back toward increasing reliance on powerful local patrons was noted by many long before the elections of 1977. And significantly, as the 1977 elections approached, the willingness of the Party to increasingly tap *biradari* politics for political support became for many a touchstone of the Party's failures. 'Back to the Biradari System?' asked one journal pointedly in November 1976. Nothing, in the view of critics, marked more clearly than this the long-term failure of the Party to establish new bonds linking society and state. It was the Party's own ideological disarray and its lack of a strong 'democratic party organization,' its critics declared, that were now pushing the Party logically toward 'organizing the people in the name of their respective *biradaries*.'³⁹ The Party's movement toward open reliance on *biradari* and patronage politics thus became a barometer of the decline of effective party organization linking society and the state.

This relationship between *biradari* politics and the lack of effective political party organization became all the more clear with the advent of a new military regime under Zia al-Haq. Zia, of course, like Ayub Khan, acted initially in seizing power to sever the state from the political process. Endlessly promising the return to democratic forms, Zia finally held 'partyless' elections in 1985 prior to the lifting of martial law. To the surprise of very few, however, the results were a resurgence of *biradari* and local patronage politics on a wide

³⁸ Philip E. Jones, 'Changing Party Structures in Pakistan,' pp. 132–33.

³⁹ *Viewpoint* (Lahore), 12 November 1976.

scale.⁴⁰ This, of course, was completely consistent with Zia's intent. 'Partyless' elections allowed, in many respects, for a system of controlled representation based on local interests—much like that defined in the 19th century by the British—that could not threaten the state. But the other side of this, of course, was increasing reliance on the power of a relatively unconstrained bureaucratic regime, in strong alliance with the military, linking the state to the population. In some respects Zia's ideological emphasis on an ideology of Islamization, dictated largely from above, fit also into this same framework, as it was aimed toward justifying the state in terms largely disconnected from the actual frameworks of representation operating in local politics.⁴¹ What unified Zia's simultaneous encouragement of local patronage and *biradari* politics on the one hand, and state-directed Islamization on the other, was only the commitment of all these policies to the maintenance of stable hierarchies of inequality in Punjab, linked to religion, the domination of men over women, and the maintenance of local patronage structures legitimized in *biradari* idioms. But the power of *biradari* idioms also derived from their ultimate grounding not in the realms of bureaucratic state administration, but in bonds of internally-rooted reciprocal obligation linked to 'blood.' That the importance of *biradari* grew hand-in-hand with the increasingly heavy hand of state control under Zia, reflected the long-standing fact that the ideology of *biradari* still represented a mode not only of accommodation to state power, but also of resistance to the pervasive establishment of bureaucratic control, perhaps not much of a consolation to the poor, but certainly one to local land and power holders.

The re-emergence of party politics after the death of Zia has of course changed the political picture dramatically in many respects, though the continuing importance of *biradari* in Punjab elections was

⁴⁰ This has been discussed by many authors. See, for example, Rasul B. Rais, 'Elections in Pakistan: Is Democracy Winning?' *Asian Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 1985) pp. 43–61.

⁴¹ This of course is an over-simplification. Islamization did appeal to certain political parties and certain segments of the population. For some discussion of Zia's 'Islamic' policies, see Anita Weiss, *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan: The Application of Islamic Laws in a Modern State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

clear in the elections of 1990. As newspaper accounts of the election campaign have indicated, the relationships between local kinship solidarity, bureaucracy and party politics have grown increasingly complex.⁴² But as a flexible idiom for the development of local alliances based on political transactions, *biradari* still has an important role to play. Whatever the changes that have occurred, the outlines of the tense and yet symbiotic relationship between *biradari* and bureaucracy, a relationship dating to the British colonial period, are still strongly in evidence.

⁴² See, for example, Theodore P. Wright, Jr., 'Biradaris in Punjab Elections,' *The Journal of Political Science*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1991) p. 79.

Shrines, Succession and Sources of Moral Authority

One of the most persistent problems within the Indian Islamic tradition has been the definition of the proper relationship between religious and political authority. The tension between political and religious authority has reappeared again and again in different guises, and yet has repeatedly eluded effective resolution. In its roots, the problem may be inherent in Islam itself, for the Islamic tradition tells its followers that religion and politics, that the inner life and the social life, should be united. Yet in practical terms, the political world of Muslim society particularly in the countryside, has at best been defined only partially by Quranic ideals. It is in this context that sufi shrines (*dargahs*) have played a central role in the politics of rural Punjab, mediating not just between individuals and God, but between the social worlds of patronage, tribalism and *biradari* on the one hand, and the civilizational tradition of moral community defined by the Quran on the other.

The focus in the following pages will be specifically on the effects of political changes in the modern period on popular expectations concerning the type of religious leadership that these *dargahs* should provide. The roots of this structure of religious leadership in fact go back to the original conversion of the bulk of the population of western Punjab to Islam in the pre-Mughal era. Though little is known in detail about the conversion of the Punjab, it is usually credited to the work of sufi mystics who established their *khanqahs* in western Punjab in the years following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate

and introduced the sufi orders—the Chishti, the Suhrawardy, and the Qadri—into the Punjab.¹ These *khanqahs* served as local outposts of

Islam which linked the diffuse, tribally organized population of the Punjab to the larger Islamic community. Subsequently, it was these local centres, first the sufi *khanqahs* and later the tombs of these sufi saints, which provided the focus for Islamic organization in most of rural western Punjab, and it was to these centres that the population looked for religious leadership.

Religious leadership at these shrines was usually provided by a *sajjada nishin* (literally, ‘he who sits on the prayer carpet’), who was normally a descendant of the original saint. The development of such hereditary religious leadership associated with sufi shrines was a phenomenon, as Trimingham has observed in his study of the sufi orders, found over much of the Islamic world as the influence of sufism was increasingly routinized and popularized.² The hereditary religious authority of the *sajjada nishin* was largely based on the transmission of *barakat*, or religious charisma, from the original saint to his descendants and to his tomb. Because of this *barakat*, which linked the *sajjada nishin* to the original saint, the *sajjada nishin* was recognized as a religious intermediary who could provide access for the devotee to the favour of God. The effect of such hereditary leadership was to give stability to the sufi shrines as local religious centres and to provide access to the religious benefits of the shrine to a wide circle of worshippers. ‘The hospices with their associated tombs,’ Trimingham has written, ‘became the foci of the religious aspirations of the ordinary man who sought the *barakat* of the saints.’³

The transmission of *barakat* also helped to stimulate the proliferation of shrines in the Punjab in the centuries following the conversion, particularly as the descendants and the *khalifas*, or deputies, of the original saints spread across much of the Punjab. Networks of shrines grew which were loosely linked together within the sufi orders; in many cases a large and well-known shrine became

¹ A general account of the conversion in Punjab is given in T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), pp. 285–7.

² Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 173.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

the centre of a network of much smaller shrines which were monuments to the disciples and descendants of the more well-known saint.⁴ By the beginning of the 20th century, as one British officer noted, the districts of western Punjab along the Indus were 'dotted with shrines, tombs of the sainted dead . . . and to the shrines of the saints, thousands upon thousands of devotees resort, in the hopes of gaining something on the sacred soil . . .'.⁵ Many such shrines had their own lines of *sajjada nishins* who served as *pirs* for large circles of these disciples.

The exercise of religious authority at these shrines was associated with certain religious practices. The links of the *sajjada nishin* to the original saint and the links of the original saint to God were dramatized every year in a ceremony marking the death anniversary of the saint, or *urs*. The *urs*, which literally means wedding, marked the union of the original saint with God, and the *urs* ceremonies themselves provided symbolic justification for the position of the *sajjada nishin*, who normally had to perform prescribed ceremonial duties which underscored his special links to the original saint as the inheritor of *barakat* and thus defined his effectiveness as religious intermediary.⁶ The role of the *sajjada nishin* as religious intermediary was commonly formalized by the tie of *pir* and *murid*, or master and disciple, between the *sajjada nishin* of a shrine and the worshipper. This did not bind the disciple to follow any rigid spiritual discipline; rather, it bound the disciple to accept the religious leadership of the *pir*, to whom he would usually make payments or offerings, and in return the *pir* provided access to *barakat* for the *murid*, which in immediate terms might include little more than the provision of magic

⁴ The best example of such a network of related shrines is that of the Bokhari Sayyids, the descendants of Sayyid Jalaluddin Bokhari of Uch, whose shrines are found in several districts of southwest Punjab. For a list of the numerous surviving branches of the Bokhari Sayyids in the 20th century, see *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, p. 58.

⁵ Major Aubrey O'Brien, 'The Mohammadan Saints of the Western Punjab,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 41 (1911), p. 511.

⁶ Government of India, *Report of the Dargah Khwaja Saheb (Ajmer) Committee of Enquiry* (New Delhi: Government Press, 1949), pp. 28–29. The report discusses the development of the office of hereditary *sajjada nishin* and the duties the *sajjada nishin* was expected to perform.

amulets, but which would give the disciple some reasonable assumption that his prayers might be heard.⁷ Religious learning or outward piety were not necessary attributes for a *sajjada nishin*. Though such attributes might increase his reputation and bring him new followers, his effectiveness as a religious leader rested on his descent from a saint, which, through the transmission of *barakat*, gave him access to the favor of God and thus the ability to act as a religious intermediary.⁸

The establishment of colonial authority, while in some ways underwriting the authority of these local sufi religious leaders, in other ways subjected them to intense new forms of civilizational pressure. Two shrines in particular will furnish the material for this study, two of the most important Chishti *dargahs* of the western Punjab—the shrine of Baba Farid Ganj-i Shakar at Pakpattan and the shrine of Khwaja Sulaiman at Taunsa Sharif on the Indus. Evidence, derived primarily from British court cases, suggests that a study of the changing character of the moral authority of religious leaders at these shrines may help to open up larger questions concerning the relationship between Islamic ideals for social organization and the political structure of British India.

The shrine of Baba Farid is a natural focus for a study of rural shrines in the Punjab, for it stands at the head of the Punjab's rural *dargahs*, as one of the oldest and the most venerated. As Richard Eaton has shown, the development of the shrine provides an almost classic case study of the close relationship between ecology and political structure on one hand and the organization of religious authority on the other. Dependent largely on the support of gradually settling nomads in the *bar* country between the Sutlej and the Ravi rivers, the shrine at Pakpattan served from an early date as a bridge between the religious system of the localities and the wider world of Islam. Although the system of popular devotionism that developed at

⁷ The role of a *pir* is discussed in Adrian C. Mayer, 'Pir and Murshid: An Aspect of Religious Leadership in West Pakistan,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (January 1967), pp. 160–61.

⁸ Trimingham notes that the concept of *wilaya*, or saintship, had no necessary connection with moral distinctions, but rather was based on the ability to experience the favour of God. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, pp. 227–28.

the shrine had little to do with the Quranic tradition, the continued presence of the spirit of Baba Farid himself provided both an intermediary vehicle for access to divine favor and a link to the broader Islamic community. The recognition of Baba Farid as a great sufi saint within the *sunni* tradition was visibly confirmed at the shrine by the official recognition given by the Delhi court and by the magnificent tombs constructed by the sultans on the site. Political recognition from an early date thus underlay the shrine's popular recognition as an important spiritual center, and subsequently, the role of the shrine as an intermediary religious focus within Islam was inextricably tied to its place within a larger political system. Just as the spirit of Baba Farid was at the hinge between the belief systems of the marginally Islamized tribes and the Quranic tradition, the shrine's ritual also symbolized its intermediary position between the local political systems of the tribes and the larger Muslim empire. As Eaton shows, this was embodied in the very terminology used to describe the organization and functioning of the shrine, terminology that was drawn from the functioning of the Muslim court.⁹

The religious authority of the *sajjada nishin* derived from his simultaneous participation in more than one system of values. As a descendant of Baba Farid, he was the inheritor of the saint's *barakat*, which placed him in a line of direct access to the moral authority derived from the saint's proximity to God. Such access to higher spiritual authority was critical to the *sajjada nishin*'s influence, and its importance was reflected in continued sufi teaching at the shrine. The successful exercise of the popular authority of the *sajjada nishin*, however, also depended on his ability to operate effectively in local politics. In sharp contrast with the ideal of religious leadership exemplified by Baba Farid, whose moral authority was acquired by moving outside the world of normal political relations in order to gain closer access to God, the religious influence of the *sajjada nishin* derived from the very fact that he was able to operate within such an everyday political world.

⁹ Richard M. Eaton, 'The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid in Pakpattan, Punjab,' in Barbara Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 333–56.

The character of the influence of *sajjada nishins* in the centuries after Baba Farid was defined by the nature of the local religious system that had developed around the shrine. The religious authority of the shrine was not centralized under the *sajjada nishin*'s control, but was dispersed among the entire Chishti *biradari*, the descendants of Baba Farid in the districts surrounding the shrine. These descendants were sometimes the *sajjada nishins* of other small shrines in the area, the tombs of many of Baba Farid's more pious descendants,¹⁰ and they were sometimes substantial landowners and village officials.¹¹ All shared, however, in the moral authority that derived from Baba Farid's own sanctity and in the access to divine favor which this gave them, and all were able as *pirs* to offer this access to others. 'All the descendants of Baba Farid,' said one 20th century witness, with only slight exaggeration, 'do the business of Piri Muridi.'¹² By the 19th and 20th centuries, the *sajjada nishins* of the shrine presided over a system of authority that paralleled the local systems of authority headed by the tribal chiefs and landowners. As Pamela Price has shown for another part of India, such systems were themselves normally based on the control of the movement of resources in a framework in which power itself was extremely diffused.¹³

¹⁰ How many such subordinate shrines existed is impossible to say, but religious leaders associated with several of them testified at the Pakpattan succession case in the 1930s. Lahore High Court (LHC), Regular First Appeal no. 93 of 1939; Dewan Ghulam Rasul vs. Ghulam Qutabuddin. Evidence, vol. 2, pp. 66–99, 122–24, 167–68. There were also shrines to *khalifas* of the *sajjada nishins* at Pakpattan, who were not themselves part of the Chishti *biradari*; for example, Evidence, vol. 2, pp. 199–200. I should like to thank Dick Eaton for letting me use his copies of these evidence volumes.

¹¹ In the 1890s the Chishtis owned nine percent of all the land in Pakpattan tehsil. P.J. Fagan, *Final Report of the Revision of Settlement of the Montgomery District, 1892–99* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1899), p. 25. Large landowners and village officials appeared among the Chishtis who gave evidence at the 1930 trial.

¹² Statement of Shaikh Mubammad Din, Zaildar of Daliana. LHC, Appeal no. 93 of 1939, Evidence, vol. 2, p. 28.

¹³ Pamela G. Price, 'Rajadharma in 19th Century South India: Land, Litigation and Largesse in Ramnad Zamindari,' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS), vol. 13, no. 2 (1979), pp. 207–39.

Ironically, though the moral authority of the shrine derived from a single source, the exercise of such authority thus depended largely on the *sajjada nishin*'s political management of a system of which the shrine was at the center. The success of a *sajjada nishin* depended on his ability to increase the resources that came into the shrine, both from the state and from the devotees, and to distribute those resources at the shrine itself among the *biradari* so that the number of adherents would be increased and the prestige of the *dargah* maintained.¹⁴

The precise religious expectations of the *sajjada nishin* himself in these circumstances seem to have been somewhat ambiguous and to have been closely tied to the changing political context. Although in the early days the piety and the spiritual reputation of the *sajjada nishin* were certainly important in maintaining the reputation of the shrine at court and thus enhancing its prestige, subsequent changes in the political roles of the *sajjada nishins* appear to have also affected the exercise of their local religious authority. The interrelationship of the political context with the character of the religious leadership offered by the *sajjada nishin* at Pakpattan was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the situation during the years of Mughal decline, when the *diwans* of Pakpattan asserted their political independence from the Mughals and battled with neighboring rajas and with the Sikhs to defend their own petty kingdom. Although far more extensive research would be necessary to verify this, important changes in the style of religious leadership of the *sajjada nishins* seem to date to this period.

From the time of the 16th *diwan*, the Pakpattan *sajjada nishins*, as local tradition had it, 'were inclined to make conquests, to maintain armies, and to build forts. They themselves stopped giving spiritual

¹⁴ Perhaps the most obvious outward parallel between the display of authority by the *sajjada nishin* and by local chiefs was in the maintenance of a *langar* or free kitchen. The constant hospitality symbolized by a *langar* was important in preserving the authority of many Punjab chiefs. Similarly, the maintenance of a *langar* was critical for the status of a *sajjada nishin*. As Miyan Mahmud of Taunsa said, 'a *sajjada nashin* may or may not keep a *langar*; as far as I have seen a *sajjada* who keeps a *langar* is considered greater than one who does not.' Deposition of the plaintiff. Privy Council, PC Appeal no. 118 of 1921, Khwaja Muhammad Hamid vs. Mian Mahmud and others. Evidence, vol. 2, pp. 31–41.

education and employed Maulvis, Imams, Khatibs and Mubalighs for the purpose.’¹⁵ Although it can be doubted whether this was a completely new element at that time, we can speculate on the general political pressures that may have led to this development. As the local political system of the shrine became increasingly separated from the larger Muslim empire, there seems to have been a concomitant tendency toward functional specialization between the making of *murids*, which the *sajjada nishins* continued to do, and the providing of religious instruction and the leading of prayers—functions that symbolized the inclusion of the *sajjada nishin* and his followers in the larger Muslim community. With the *sajjada nishin* himself no longer playing an intermediate political role in a larger Muslim empire, but instead concentrating his attention on his local political leadership in mobilizing his *murids* for battle, the religious functions linking the shrine to the Quranic tradition were more appropriately assigned by the *sajjada nishin* to subordinate religious specialists. This did not mean that the shrine had ceased to be a crucial link between the local traditions and the greater tradition of Islam, but indicated that the type of religious leadership provided by the *sajjada nishin* had changed with the changing character of his political position.

The importance of the political context for the types of religious leadership provided at such rural shrines can be seen even more clearly in the development during this same period of the second shrine in our discussion, the one at Taunsa. Although more recent, the shrine at Taunsa followed closely the pattern at Pakpattan, for the shrine, which developed on the west bank of the Indus in the late-18th and 19th centuries, drew much of its support from an area in which largely nomadic Baloch and Pathan tribes had come under increasing political pressures and, particularly after the middle of the 19th century, were gradually settling.¹⁶ The larger political milieu in which

¹⁵ Evidence of Mubammad Husain, Qureshi, age 37, zamindar of Pakpattan. LHC, Appeal no. 93 of 1939, Evidence, vol. 2, p. 278.

¹⁶ The character of the following at the Taunsa shrine requires more research. It appears, however, that the influence of the shrine, which is in the Indus river plain, increased markedly at the same time that the influence of the shrine of Sakhi Sarwar, situated at the base of the hills, was gradually declining in the late 19th century. The shift may be explained by a decline in

the shrine developed, however, contrasted sharply with the pre-Mughal situation in which the shrine at Pakpattan had emerged. The religious impulse that inspired the establishment of Khwaja Sulaiman's *khanqah* at Taunsa had originated during the 18th century in Delhi in a period of declining Muslim political authority. In contrast with the spiritual concerns of Baba Farid, therefore, Khwaja Sulaiman drew his inspiration from a tradition that in its origins was preoccupied with a concern for popular religious reform as a religious answer to the decline of Muslim power. Religious reformers at Delhi, of whom Shah Wali Allah was the most famous, had increasingly emphasized during the 18th and 19th centuries the importance of educating Muslims and of popular Muslim organization according to Quranic ideals as compensation for the collapse of Mughal authority. The immediate spiritual mentors of Khwaja Sulaiman were not direct disciples of Shah Wali Allah, but they were nevertheless strongly influenced by these same reformist concerns. Shah Fakhr ad-Din of Delhi and his most important *khalifa*, Khwaja Nur Muhammad Maharwi, had sought in the 18th century to spread this reforming spirit through a revitalization of the Chishti order, seeking to reach the still partly Islamized and politically semi-independent tribes. Khwaja Nur Muhammad established a *khanqah* north of Bahawalpur near the frontier of settled society, and his *khalifa*, Khwaja Sulaiman, established his own Taunsa *khanqah* 150 miles farther west.¹⁷ Set among the tribes of the western Punjab, this *khanqah* and the subsequent shrine displayed many of the same institutional features that had characterized the shrine at Pakpattan, but—because of its intellectual antecedents in the reforming tradition at Delhi—these were overlaid by a strong emphasis on religious education and popular reform.

Ironically, the *khanqah* of Khwaja Sulaiman thus emerged as a center of reforming rural religious leadership only a short time after the *diwans* of Pakpattan had begun to withdraw from an active,

the nomadic movement of the Baloch to the hills and increased agricultural settlement in the river plain. At the moment, however, this is speculation.

¹⁷ The careers of Shah Fakhr ad-Din of Delhi, Khwaja Nur Mubammad Maharwi, and Khwaja Sulaiman of Taunsa are all traced in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-i Masha'ikhi Chisht* (Karachi: Maktaba'i 'Arifin, 1975), pp. 460–560, 608–66.

educating religious role. At the same time that the *diwans* were abandoning their role as religious instructors, Khwaja Sulaiman of Taunsa was emphasizing more strongly than ever the instruction of his disciples in the *shariat*, a task in which he was accompanied at one time by as many as 50 of his *khalifas* at the Taunsa *khanqah*.¹⁸ This was not merely a return to the ‘other-worldly’ religious style of Baba Farid, for particularly under Khwaja Sulaiman’s successor, Khwaja Allah Bakhsh, the authority of the *sajjada nishin* at Taunsa was to become as firmly embedded in its own local political milieu as was that of the *diwans* of Pakpattan. Rather, the style of religious leadership at Taunsa represented an alternative religious answer to a general crisis in the nature of rural religious authority that had followed the collapse of the Muslim state.

With the establishment of colonial rule, the religious relationship between the locality and the world of Islam could no longer be effectively defined, whether at Taunsa or Pakpattan, by the political relationship between the local leaders and an imperial state. Changes in the character of religious leadership at both shrines can best be seen, therefore, as part of a wider search in a new political context for new bases of authority—not, ultimately, for a new source of moral authority, for that could not change, but for new standards of religious leadership in the new political context. Succession disputes provide a moment when the complex position of these shrines, at the hinge between local politics and the larger Islamic order, came clearly into view. While the authority of shrine-based *sajjada nishins* was tied, through *barakat* and descent, to their intermediary roles in a civilizational order defined by the Islamic tradition and by God, the legal framing of their position was equally tied under the British regime to property and to their positions within local structures of power and of custom, which were mediated by the British. Such cases thus brought the nature of the moral leadership exercised by such religious leaders into self-conscious debate.

Succession and Moral Authority: The Case of Pakpattan

The 19th- and 20th-century battles over the succession at Pakpattan were especially significant, for they indicated the principles on which

¹⁸ Nizami, *Tarikh-i Masha'ikh-i Chisht*, pp. 620–22.

the authority of the *sajjada nishins* had come to rest. As a dispute between the grandson and the uncle of the late *sajjada nishin* demonstrated in the 1880s, succession at the shrine was subject to several traditional constraints that pointed to the origins of the moral authority which the *sajjada nishins* claimed to exercise. First, though the succession had normally been hereditary, the validity of the appointment of a successor—even his eldest son—by the old *sajjada nishin* depended on his receipt of a revelation from ‘the spirit of Baba Farid-ud-din.’¹⁹ In fact, the question of such a revelation does not seem to have seriously impeded the old *sajjada nishin*’s free right of appointment, but the appeal to such a revelation, no matter who the successor, indicated clearly the continuing centrality of Baba Farid as the source of the *sajjada nishin*’s moral authority. It was Baba Farid himself who, in effect, with his direct access to God, decided who would occupy his worldly seat of authority.

This constraint on the succession was balanced, however, by a strong appeal to the right of the general body of *murids*, and more specifically of the Chishti *biradari*, to approve the decision. The basis for this claim lay partly in the common interest of all members of the *biradari* in the shrine, as all shared in the sanctity of which Baba Farid was the source, but it also pointed to the strong political element in the authority exercised by the *sajjada nishin*. Although his authority derived ultimately from Baba Farid’s own close association with God, the exercise of that authority was by no means absolute, but depended also on the consent of those who participated in the religious system at the shrine. Without such consent, the very basis for his religious authority would be compromised. The key to the authority of the *sajjada nishin* thus lay in the traditional balance between these contrasting elements—elements that reflected the simultaneous links of the system to the Islamic moral order and to the political systems of the countryside.

As the succession crisis of the 1880s demonstrated, the very presence of the British courts tended to upset this balance. The existence of a higher court of appeal for deciding the succession was not in itself a challenge to the moral authority of the shrine, for the grounding of the shrine within a larger political system clearly implied

¹⁹ Report of PC Appeal, 1894; Sayad Muhammad vs. Fattah Muhammad and others. *Indian Law Reports*, Calcutta series, vol. 22, p. 328.

its traditional subordination in such matters to a higher political authority. Rather, such an appeal to the British implied a disjunction between the religious and the political elements in the *sajjada nishin*'s authority. As representative of the sovereign political authority, the role of the British courts, despite their adversary format, came very close to the traditional mediatory role of the sovereign in the localities—a role reflected in the courts' strong legal emphasis on the reaching of a settlement based on the customs of the locality. The decision of the courts was in fact well suited to the preservation of the legitimate political authority of the *sajjada nishin* as an intermediary between the locality and the empire, and to the preservation under the British of the local customs that nurtured the shrine. But the decision was nevertheless rendered in a context that isolated it from the value system of Islam, a situation emphasized by the way the court weighed the contrasting customs affecting the shrine's succession. Although the courts tried to assess, for example, the customary political claims of the *murids* and of the Chishti *biradari* in determining the succession, they found it far more difficult to assess the legal significance of the religious claims of Baba Farid. As a prominent Muslim lawyer put it, 'it is not in the province of a civil Court to decide whether a particular Sajjada Nashin has received a revelation from the founder.'²⁰ The court could in fact, weigh whether or not such a revelation had been communicated by the old *sajjada nishin* to his followers, but even at that, the emphasis fell not on the religious significance of the revelation but on the immediate political pressures involved in its communication.²¹ The result was that in practice, the moral authority

²⁰ The quote comes from a later case, but the court faced the same problem in the 1890s. Report of LHC, Appeal no. 93 of 1939. *Diwan Ghulam Rasul vs. Ghulam Qutab-ud-Din. All India Report (AIR)* (Lahore, 1942), p. 144. The lawyer quoted is Sir Wazir Hasan.

²¹ The problem the courts had with the issue is indicated by their tendency to judge the question of the legitimacy of the *sajjada nishin*'s appointment according to legal standards of 'undue influence.' If the old *diwan* could be shown, in other words, not to be in possession of sufficient faculties to decide the issue rationally, and was therefore influenced to make an appointment without recognizing the consequences, then the appointment could, the courts argued, be thrown out. This was precisely the line taken by the Chief Court of Punjab in rejecting the old *diwan*'s appointment of Sayyid Muhammad, though this decision was later reversed. Obviously this left little room for a

deriving directly from Baba Farid, and thus indirectly from God, became largely irrelevant to the official succession of the *sajjada nishin*. In official eyes, his right to succeed was determined primarily by the customs associated with the *sajjada nishin*'s political leadership in the local context.

This of course did not mean that the *sajjada nishin* was denied the authority that he acquired in the eyes of his *murids*, from his descent from Baba Farid. Although in the 1880s and 1890s the official *sajjada nishin* changed three times during the course of litigation as the District Court, the Chief Court of Punjab, and the Privy Council each in turn reversed the other and installed a new *sajjada nishin*, there is no evidence that the popular following of the shrine was significantly affected.²² For most of the shrine's rural followers who sought out the *sajjada nishin* for mediation, it does not seem to have mattered precisely what sort of man the *sajjada nishin* was, or whether he had been named in a confirmed revelation, so long as he was a descendant of Baba Farid and carried out the shrine's rituals. As one witness declared, 'I am a follower of the Gaddi nashin (sic), whosoever may be occupying it.'²³ But although these developments seem to have had little impact on the shrine's mediatory power, the increasing dissociation of the *sajjada nishin* from the value system of Quranic Islam nevertheless deeply affected the shrine's traditional position as a hinge between the culture of the locality and the larger Muslim community and thus its wider reputation.

Perhaps the most striking demonstration of this was the character of the new *sajjada nishin* himself. Diwan Sayyid Muhammad, who had ultimately emerged successfully from the court challenges of the late 19th century, was not himself a learned religious man or a sufi

legal consideration of the receipt of a revelation from Baba Farid. If, for example, the *diwan* was shown not to be of legally sound mind, then could a revelation from Baba Farid himself be thrown out as 'undue influence'? *Indian Law Reports*, Calcutta Series, vol. 22, p. 329.

²² The popular following of the shrine is of course hard to judge. But P.J. Fagan, writing in 1898 just after the succession dispute, noticed no decline in the shrine's popularity, and estimated the yearly attendance at the *urs* to be between 50 and 70,000. P.J. Fagan, *Gazetteer of Montgomery District*, 1898–99, pp. 237–39.

²³ Evidence of Pir Khan, Wattu, age 62, LHC, First Appeal No. 93 of 1939, Evidence vol. 1, p. 138.

teacher. As the salaried *khatib* of the jama masjid at the Pakpattan *dargah* declared, though the *diwan* continued to make *murids*, he was not a religious teacher; he ‘used to get information about religion from me.’²⁴ What was emerging as increasingly significant under the British was that neither the *sajjada nishin*’s personal teaching and example nor the structural position of the shrine could provide the religious system of the shrine with a firm place in the tradition of Islam. In the wake of the shrine’s encounter with the British courts, the growing separation of the shrine’s political place in the empire from its religious place within the value system of Quranic Islam was becoming increasingly clear.

This situation naturally produced criticism of the role of the *sajjada nishin* from those outside the local rural context who were concerned with the definition of general standards of religious leadership and authority for the Muslim community. The most pointed religious criticism in the 20th century came from the ulama in the reformist tradition who had long been sensitive to the lack of a central Muslim political authority and had, as a result, offered a view of Islamic authority that was defined not in political but in idealist terms. These ulama were critical not only of the lack of religious guidance offered by *sajjada nishins* such as the *diwan* of Pakpattan, but also of the very nature of the mediation in such local systems, which aimed toward the linking of the local Muslims to the values of Islam through the interposition of the *sajjada nishins* and the shrines rather than through the dissemination of Islamic standards of personal behavior. For them such a mediatory solution had become meaningless under the alien British regime.²⁵

²⁴ Evidence of Maulawi ‘Abd al-Haq, Qureshi Chiraghi, *khatib*, *jami masjid* and head *qadi*, Pakpattan. LHC, Appeal no. 93 of 1939, Evidence vol. 2, p. 213.

²⁵ The rejection of the religious authority of these *sajjada nishins*, as a result of their political associations under the British, was perhaps most eloquently expressed by Mubammad Iqbal. In his poem, ‘To the Punjab Pirs,’ Iqbal contrasted his craving of ‘the saints’ gift, other-worldliness’ with what one could actually expect to get from *sajjada nishins* in 20th century Punjab: ‘God’s people have no portion in that country / Where lordly tassel sprouts from monkish cap; / That cap bred passionate faith, this tassel breeds / Passion for playing pander to Government.’ V.G. Kiernan, trans., *Poems from Iqbal* (London: John Murray, 1955), p. 58.

A more practical approach to reform, however, came from the Chishti *pirs* in the reformist line that had included the *pir* of Taunsa, who recognized the continuing vitality, even under the British, of the local Muslim political systems that had long nurtured the religious authority of the shrines. These *pirs*, unlike the reformist ulama, did not underestimate the significance of the political context in which the shrine's religious leadership was exercised, but offered instead new standards of religious commitment in the local context for the *sajjada nishins* themselves. Pir Mihr Ali Shah of Golra, for example, who was one of the most reform-minded of the new Chishti *pirs*, recognized clearly the continuing importance of the political component in the local religious authority of the *diwans* of Pakpattan, even under the British. Demonstrating his own awareness of the significance of a symbolic political model for the organization of authority at the *dargah*, Mihr Ali Shah observed that he personally reserved for the *darbar* of an important *sahib-i sajjada* such as the *diwan* of Pakpattan the respectful behavior (*adab*) that others reserved solely for worldly (i.e., government) officers.²⁶ Despite his own refusal, like that of many of the ulama, to associate politically with the British, therefore, he recognized the political responsibilities that the *diwan's* political position required him to fulfill. Although Mihr Ali Shah himself refused an invitation to attend the Delhi *darbar* of 1911, for example, on the grounds that for him to attend would be an insult to Islam, he admitted that it was nevertheless proper for the *diwan sahib* to attend, as the *diwan*—in addition to being a *pir*—also claimed status as a *jagirdar* dating back to the days of Islamic government.²⁷ The main problem in defining new standards for the exercise of the religious authority of the *sajjada nishin* was therefore to reconcile reformist standards with the maintenance of the *sajjada nishin's* political position—to restore, in effect, the balance between the authority he could claim in a system of Islamic values and that which derived from his role in the local political context.

The pressures for reform and the political problems such reform entailed, however, were indicated most clearly in the wake of another succession crisis at the Pakpattan shrine in the 1930s—one that

²⁶ Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mihr-i Munir* (Golra: Sayyid Ghulam Muhi ad-Din, 1973?), p. 291.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

exposed once again the bases of the moral authority of the *sajjada nishin* of the shrine of Baba Farid to public scrutiny. This crisis, which erupted on the death of Diwan Sayyid Muhammad in 1934, was in many ways similar to the cases of the 1880s and 1890s, for the issues revolved around the traditional clash of the old *diwan*'s right of appointment with the right of the *biradari* 'to approve or reject any nomination made by the last holder and in the last resort itself to select a successor.'²⁸ But the case also brought to the forefront the problem of defining the *sajjada nishin*'s suitability for religious leadership in reformist, independent of the rights of either Baba Farid or the *biradari*.

This issue was called into question particularly by the claims put forward by one side in the case for the succession to the *gaddi* by the old *diwan*'s minor son, Ghulam Qutb ad-Din, who was only 11 at the time of the *diwan*'s death. To bolster its own claim, the opposing side in the case argued that the succession of a minor at Pakpattan was not compatible with the important position of religious leadership the *diwan* would have to fill, for it was 'utterly inconsistent with Mahomedan law.'²⁹ This argument by no means indicated an acceptance by the *biradari* of Muslim law as the touchstone for the moral authority of the *sajjada nishin*, for the lawyers in the case themselves admitted that the local customs of the shrine had always outweighed Muslim law with regard to the establishment of succession. Nevertheless, the introduction of this consideration into the case pointed toward the recognition of standards outside the customary religious system of the shrine—standards that tied the shrine to the ideals of the community as a whole. Although such standards hardly preoccupied the competing parties, the implications of an awareness of these standards for the type of leadership that could be expected of the *sajjada nishin* were indicated clearly by at least one witness in the case, a village *lambardar* and a *murid* of the *gaddi*, who had been exposed to religious influences outside the local system while studying for a year in a *madrassa* at Kasur. The succession of a minor to the *gaddi* would be inappropriate, he thought, because a minor could not possibly perform the duties that a *sajjada nishin* would be

²⁸ Diwan Ghulam Rasul vs. Ghulam Qutab-ud-Din, *AIR*, Lahore, 1942, p. 143.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

expected to perform. Not only would a minor as yet lack religious education, but, equally important, he could not meet the standards of religious leadership that the Islamic tradition required; ‘a minor cannot,’ he noted, ‘lead in prayers.’³⁰

Although the succession of Ghulam Qutb ad-Din to the *gaddi* was subsequently confirmed by the court, the concern with the kind of leadership that could be expected of a minor *sajjada nishin* by no means disappeared. On the contrary, the education and training of the young *diwan* and the management of the shrine during the *diwan*’s minority subsequently became the subject of intense public debate—a debate precipitated by a British move to take the estate of the shrine under the Court of Wards and to educate the *sajjada nishin* themselves. In a way that perhaps nothing else could have, this British move galvanized local concern for the protection of the religious authority of the *sajjada nishin*, for it dramatized, even within the local context, the dissociation between the shrine’s political and its religious position. The underlying motive of the British was only to preserve their traditional political relationship with the shrine by making special arrangements for the management of the estate during the *diwan*’s minority and by training the *sajjada nishin* in such a way as to ensure that the exercise of his authority continued to fit effectively into the British political system. The direct takeover of the administration of the shrine, however, highlighted as never before the strength of the shrine’s political ties to the alien British Government, and thus called into question, even for many at the local level, the effective religious functioning of the *sajjada nishin*. As a petition from the *sajjada nishin* of one of the subordinate Chishti shrines near Pakpattan indicated, the takeover of the shrine by the Court of Wards was seen as political interference in the functioning of the shrine—a challenge that represented a threat to the *diwan*’s authority to perform the shrine’s religious rituals.³¹ The Anjuman Islamia, Montgomery, put the issue even more bluntly: the British takeover would, it declared, ‘seriously undermine the diwan’s position and the status of

³⁰ Evidence of Qamar Din, Bhani Rajput, age 62, cultivator and *lambardar*. LHC, Appeal no. 93 of 1939, Evidence, vol. 2, p. 38.

³¹ Petition from a number of followers of Baba Farid, submitted through Pir Muhammad Badar Din, *sajjada nishin* of Opana, Tehsil Muktsar, Ferozepore, n.d., Punjab Board of Revenue, File 601/1/24/17.

the *gaddi*.' This would, it implied, undercut the authority of the *sajjada nishin* even within the local network; 'income from religious sources,' it warned, 'will dwindle.'³²

The most open concern with defining new standards of moral authority, however, was prompted by the British plan to send the young *sajjada nishin* to the Aitchison Chiefs College in Lahore for his education. For the reformist *Chishtipirs* this marked the crux of the issue, for though they had accepted the importance of the *sajjada nishin*'s political position within the British system, his education at Aitchison College would signal his absorption into the British value system as well. As a very result of his political position, they had come to see an increasing emphasis on his religious education as absolutely essential to the continued maintenance of his moral authority. Even before the *olddiwan*'s death, therefore, these religious leaders had strongly criticized an attempt by the old *diwan* himself to send his son to Aitchison, an attack that had soon forced the *diwan* to withdraw the youngster from the school.³³ Now that Ghulam Qutb ad-Din had succeeded to the *gaddi*, it was even more critical that he be trained in a proper way so as to maintain the links of the *sajjada nishin* to the moral values of Quranic Islam. As the mother of the young *diwan sahib* reported to the governor in 1936, the proposal to send the boy to Aitchison was being 'hotly opposed by the *Sajjada nashins* of Ajmer, Delhi, Mangrol, Piran Kalyar, Golra Sharif, Taunsa Sharif, Bassi Sharif, Hansi, Upana and Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Dargah of Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, Delhi, etc.' 'They still persist,' she emphasized, 'in maintaining that the *sajjada nashin* should be a *Darwesh* and he has no need of receiving the education which is imparted to the sons of rich families.'³⁴ As an answer to the dilemmas in the sources of the authority of the *sajjada nishin*, these *pirs* thus looked finally to a new emphasis on religious education as an essential element in the definition of the moral authority wielded by the *sajjada nishin*.

³² Telegram, Anjuman Islamia, Montgomery, to Revenue Member, Punjab, 19 October 1936. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 601/1/24/17.

³³ Details reported to be in *Munadi* (Delhi), May 1935. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 601/1/24/17.

³⁴ Petition, the mother of Diwan Qutb ad-Din to Government. 2 November 1936. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 601/1/24/17.

The Case of Taunsa: *Rais and Darwesh*

The balance between religious education for a *sajjada nishin* and the ability to operate effectively within the rural political milieu in British Punjab was of course not an easy one to maintain or to define. The practical dilemmas in the development of such a model for the behavior of a *sajjada nishin* under the British were demonstrated in the 20th century by a series of disputes over the succession to the *gaddi* of the shrine of Taunsa.

Although the *sajjada nishins* who succeeded Khwaja Sulaiman generally continued his emphasis on religious education and built new schools at the shrine, they became increasingly susceptible in the 20th century to the same sort of local political pressures as those affecting the shrine at Pakpattan. By the turn of the century, the shrine at Taunsa had developed neither a distinct Chishti *biradari* nor a complex set of succession customs such as existed at Pakpattan, but the shrine, under the leadership of Khwaja Sulaiman's grandson, Khwaja Allah Bakhsh, had nevertheless developed strong ties with the local political networks of southwest Punjab. It was, in fact, precisely Khwaja Allah Bakhsh's ability to expand the social and political influence of the shrine that had earned him a reputation among many as 'an even greater saint' than Khwaja Sulaiman.³⁵ Working astutely to develop strategic political alliances, Khwaja Allah Bakhsh was able to attract the contributions needed to build an impressive group of buildings at the shrine. Like in Pakpattan centuries earlier, such outward display of political recognition proved critical in creating and providing a validation for the shrine's growing popular religious influence. As a court deposition related in describing this process, 'Allah Bakhsh appears to have been a very businesslike as well as a very saintly man,' a combination that accounted for his particular influence.

During his lifetime the mosque and the family tomb became places to which pilgrims resorted in considerable numbers, particularly on the occasion of the *urs* or fair held on the anniversary of Khwaja Suleman's death. With the offerings made to him by these pilgrims, with the contributions from the Nawab of Bahawalpur and other

³⁵ Report of Punjab Chief Court, First Civil Appeal no. 452 of 1913; Khwaja Mahmud vs. Khwaja Muhammad Hamid and others. *Indian Cases*, 38 (1917): pp. 387–88.

neighbours, and with the money made in agriculture and in trade which he started, and also with the estate of his sons hereinafter mentioned, he built all or nearly all the buildings at Taunsa.³⁶

Khwaja Allah Bakhsh himself appears to have been able during his lifetime to balance effectively his roles as a religious teacher and as an increasingly important local magnate. The tension between these roles, however, even at a shrine like Taunsa, which had developed initially with a strong reformist impulse, became evident in disputes over the succession after his death. The basic cause of the succession disputes at Taunsa was the marriage connections that had been established by Khwaja Allah Bakhsh in order to bolster the social and political position of his family. Khwaja Allah Bakhsh, who was himself by caste a Pathan, took as his third wife the daughter of Ghulam Qadir Khan Khakwani of Multan District, who was one of the wealthiest and largest Pathan landowners of southwest Punjab. This marriage, which was no doubt calculated to improve his social status and to bring land into his family, succeeded admirably for Ghulam Qadir Khan fixed three hundred squares of land in Multan District on the heirs of Khwaja Allah Bakhsh by his daughter. The result was that Khwaja Allah Bakhsh's son by this marriage, Miyan Mahmud, emerged as a wealthy landed proprietor, who himself contracted several socially and politically strategic marriages with leading Pathan families of Dera Ismail Khan.

It was Miyan Mahmud's growing political connections that laid the groundwork for the eruption of a protracted conflict over succession at the shrine. Despite his rising social position, Miyan Mahmud was not the oldest son, and consequently, at the death of Khwaja Allah Bakhsh, it was not the well-connected Miyan Mahmud, but rather the more saintly but less wealthy Miyan Muhammad Musa, who succeeded to the *qaddi*. Miyan Mahmud's social and political position, however, had placed him at the center of a group of influential and wealthy religious followers, which made his influence at the shrine undeniable even in the face of Miyan Muhammad Musa's official succession. The succession thus produced immediate tension, which was initially mediated by a council of *tumamdars* or Baloch tribal

³⁶ Summary of Respondent's Case, background on Khwaja Allah Bakhsh. PC Appeal no. 118 of 1921, Khwaja Muhammad Hamid vs. Mian Mahmud and others, vol. 3 (pt. 2), p. 3.

chiefs, and later by a local *maulawi*.³⁷ With the death of Miyan Muhammad Musa in 1906, however, the dispute came out into the open when opposing groups favoring the succession of Miyan Muhammad Musa's son, Miyan Hamid, on the one hand, and Miyan Mahmud on the other held rival *dastarbandi* ceremonies. Although the British Deputy Commissioner officially recognized Miyan Hamid's claim, Miyan Mahmud secured the intervention of Diwan Sayyid Muhammad of Pakpattan, who arrived in Taunsa and ceremonially placed 'the sacred relics' indicating succession to the *gaddi* on Miyan Mahmud's head.³⁸ To gain full religious control of the shrine, it was ultimately Miyan Hamid who had to sue, claiming that Miyan Mahmud was infringing upon his prerogatives and performing religious rituals at the shrine that were by right the responsibility of the *sajjada nishin*.³⁹

The case between Miyan Hamid and Miyan Mahmud dramatized, on the surface at least, the tension between opposing styles of religious leadership. As John Maynard observed when he visited the shrine in 1911, the two *pirs* represented markedly different styles. Miyan Hamid's style seemed to be closer to that of a *darwesh*; he was a generally reclusive religious man who avoided contact with British government officers. Miyan Mahmud, on the other hand, was a frequent visitor at government offices who cultivated his political contacts. 'I recollect nothing,' Maynard stated, '[except] that this older gentleman's [Miyan Mahmud's] manner and dress differed markedly from those of the younger gentleman [Miyan Hamid] whom I understood to be the *sajjada nishin*. The older gentleman appeared to be a man of the world, a *rais*. I should say the younger had a very retiring and modest appearance.'⁴⁰ The course of the conflict indicated, however, that there was no easy answer to the reconciliation of these styles. Although Miyan Hamid emerged successfully from the courts with his rights confirmed, this served ultimately neither to vindicate

³⁷ Khwaja Mahmud vs. Khwaja Muhammad Hamid and others. *Indian Cases*, 38 (1917): 388.

³⁸ Letter, H.A. Carson (DC, Dera Ghazi Khan) to Miyan Mahmud, 22 February 1906. PC Appeal no. 118 of 1921, vol. 3 (documents), p. 156.

³⁹ Khwaja Mahmud vs. Khwaja Muhammad Hamid and others. *Indian Cases*, 38 (1917): 389–90.

⁴⁰ Evidence of H.J. Maynard, PC Appeal no. 118 of 1921, 1.

his style of religious leadership nor to win him the support of those local leaders with political ties to Miyan Mahmud. As the largest landowner of the Baloch Kasrani tribe declared, ‘by Government order [the] plaintiff [Miyan Hamid] is *sajada nashin*, in eyes of Musalmans [the] defendant.’⁴¹ Although the nature of the political influence at Taunsa was somewhat different from that at Pakpattan, these succession conflicts at Taunsa nevertheless indicated, as much as those at Pakpattan, the critical importance of the political milieu in affecting popular expectations for the *sajjada nishin*’s authority. In the end, this proved to be as true for Miyan Hamid as for Miyan Mahmud. The importance of religious education and teaching remained for the *sajjada nishins* at Taunsa an ideal—an ideal which they pushed for the *diwan* of Pakpattan—but in reality such an ideal had only a limited relationship to their own influence in the locality.

* * *

The tensions between the political and the religious elements in the authority of the *sajjada nishins* were indicative of wider cultural tensions in India under colonial rule. The attempt to work toward a general model for the exercise of authority by *sajjada nishins* reflected a concern to define standards for social interaction that at the same time expressed the commitment of Muslim society to a larger Islamic moral order and that provided Muslims with an effective program for dealing with the social and political world in which they lived. The intrinsic problems in such an effort, however, had grown considerably in the context of colonial rule. Since the fall of the Mughals, and particularly under the British, the *sajjada nishins* of Punjab lived in a world that was becoming more administratively integrated and, simultaneously, more culturally fragmented—a world that lacked the political framework to bind together the diverse cultural systems of the localities and to express, at least in symbolic terms, the commitment of all to the moral order of Islam. As a result, the practical meaning of commitment to Muslim community had become increasingly unclear.

⁴¹ Evidence of Sultan Muhammad Khan, Kasrani, PC Appeal no. 118 of 1921, Khwaja Muhammad Hamid vs. Mian Mahmud and others. Evidence, vol. 2, pp. 74–75.

Despite the collapse of the Muslim state, however, Muslim reformers in India had worked hard in the period of British domination to develop standards for Muslim communal solidarity based on the dissemination of ideal standards of behavior and conduct rather than on the political framework provided by the state. To restore the unity and wholeness of Muslim society they had emphasized a commitment to religious education and to the spread of Quranic standards of behavior among religious leaders and common people alike. The root answer to Muslim problems thus lay, in reformist eyes, in the spread of knowledge as a basis for direct individual commitment to an Islamic moral order—a moral order that would itself provide the basis for Muslim political solidarity. In the confusing colonial world of British India, Islam would no longer need to be adapted by symbol and ritual to the political order; it would rather, as a moral force, itself begin to shape the political order.

This view provided an idealist answer to the longstanding tension between political and religious authority, a tension that had helped to shape the peculiar forms of authority associated with the sufi shrines. But the reformist emphasis on education could not alone transform the nature of religious authority in Punjab, especially so long as the structure of tribal and landed authority in the rural localities remained basically unchanged. The attempt to define individual standards of behavior on the basis of Quranic Islam served, to a large degree, only to isolate reformers from the main political currents in rural society, where, even in the 20th century, the majority of illiterate Muslims remained deeply rooted in the cultural systems of the localities. Although the pressures of foreign rule brought increasing tension to the exercise of moral authority at the shrines, the very structure of Punjabi rural society—a structure that the British themselves had helped to maintain—prevented finding any easy answers to the dilemmas faced by rural Muslim religious leaders.

Kinship, Women and Politics in 20th-century Punjab

Women have long served as the cement of the social structure of Indian society. Innumerable anthropological and sociological studies have shown the importance of women—or more particularly, of the kinship structures in which women have provided the critical links—in structuring local social and political organization. Assessments of the role of women in the political development of 20th century Indian society, however, have often lost sight of the central importance of women in kinship structure, and more important, of kinship structure in Indian politics. In this chapter, I will try to show the symbolic role which issues of women's rights played in Muslim politics in 20th-century Punjab, not just because such issues were important for their own sake, but because they were tied to important questions concerning the role of kinship in ordering the colonial political and legal system. I can only hint at the significance of these controversies in affecting the social position of women themselves, for this is a subject that requires considerably more research. But the position of women was in fact central in the Punjab to the civilizational tensions that defined the history of British colonial rule.

The British and Customary Law: Kinship and the Ideology of the State

To understand the symbolic role of women's rights Muslim politics in 20th century Punjab, it is necessary to understand first the relationship between kinship organization and the political order under the British. The issue of women's right to property—in fact, the denial of female inheritance rights—was of central concern to the British since this was key to the stabilization of a landholding society whose social organization was fundamentally defined by tribal kinship. The

framework of British administration in the Punjab was closely tied, almost from its inception, to the social organization of 'tribes,' local units of rural administration, demarcated on the basis of extended kinship ties. As the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Robert Egerton, observed in 1878, '... the most fundamental basis for the division of the population in this part of India is tribal rather than religious, and should rest, not upon community or belief or ceremonial practice, but upon ancestral community or race in which, whether it be genuine or only suppositious the claimants of a common origin equally believe.'¹

As C.L. Tupper noted, this was central to the legitimation of British rule. 'Native society will,' he insisted, '... be the happier, so long as it can be held together by the bonds of consanguinity.'² And for native society to be truly stable and happy, as Tupper saw it, women had to be denied the right to inherit property. It was by encompassing this structure within the framework of British control that the British could, in Tupper's view, lay firmest hold on the support of the people.

The reason for this lay in the relationships of landholding to the structure of marriage in rural Punjab. Most important for our purposes here, the identification of such principles of custom pointed clearly to the importance of women in the maintenance of Punjab's rural 'tribal' fabric. Women provided the cement of the whole kinship system because, as Tupper pointed out, it was the character of marriage which gave the kinship system its basic structure and which determined the nature of inheritance patterns among the 'tribes'. What accounted for underlying similarities in custom, in spite of wide variations in detail, was the predominance of a pattern of marriage that fostered geographically widespread kinship linkages. This was the system of clan exogamy so common throughout northern India. Daughters in this system were married 'outside' the closely drawn limits of the clan, but within the looser, but still remembered, circle of the tribe or race of origin.'³ Marriage had thus become a means of keeping alive 'the sense that the clan had expanded from, the family of a common

¹ Letter from Sec. to Govt., Punjab to Sec. to Govt. of India, Dept. of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, 24 August 1878, printed in C.L. Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 225–26.

² Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, vol. 1, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

ancestor,⁴ and it was thus the key to the preservation of the whole social fabric of rural society. Since it gave the kinship system its extensive character, the structure of marriage also, indirectly, gave the kinship system its administrative and political significance for the British.

In such circumstances, the legal constraints that defined the woman's position as a link within this kinship system were of vital importance from the British perspective. Local custom, as Tupper and later British jurists analysed it, was almost universal in denying a regular share in landed inheritance to daughters, since daughters normally passed by marriage out of their clan of origin. For land to be maintained within the immediate kinship group, it was thus theoretically essential that daughters be denied any share in their fathers' inheritance. This did not mean, of course, that daughters were left without provision, either through dowry, or maintenance if they were left unmarried or widowed.⁵ But it remained a basic principle of the system that land could not pass to women unfettered, to be passed on to their heirs. In these circumstances, 'the tutelage of women,' Tupper declared, would in the ideal situation 'be perpetual.' Women would, as a result of the structure of the kinship system, always be 'under the guardianship either of their husbands; or, failing these, of the nearest agnates by blood or marriage.'⁶ Such strictures did not imply that women would be socially isolated from their clan of origin after marriage, for social relations with their clan of birth would continue. But in matters of inheritance, which in a landed society were central to the structure of kinship, these relations would, of necessity, have to be ignored.⁷ Punjabi custom was thus, in the eyes of the British, founded on the basic assumption that 'as a rule, daughters and their sons, as well as sisters and their sons, are excluded by near male collaterals.'⁸

The significance of this for the evolution of inheritance law as it affected women cannot be overemphasized. Tupper himself identified

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76, 71.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸ J. Boulnois and W.H. Rattigan, *Notes on the Customary Laws of the Punjab* (1867), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 80.

the denial of inheritance to women as a key principle underlying his theory of kinship organization. The foundations were thus laid for the translation of this principle from a description of popular practice into a normative formula supporting the 'tribal' system of kinship underlying the British administration. The exclusion of women from inheritance had become implicitly a political issue—a critical legal link in the maintenance of the British structure of authority. The denial of landed inheritance to women thus became central to the colonial state's structuring of its authority in relationship to an official vision of 'society' as defined by the pre-eminence of 'tribal' kinship.

This is not to suggest of course that such a view of women developed without ambiguities. Administrators understood that the rules of 'customary law' could not, in fact, be fully or easily assimilated to a single 'theory' of Punjabi social organization rooted in tribal kinship. Uncertainty about this in fact led to British ambivalence about state codification of 'customary law,' which was never carried out. But the tendency of court decisions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was nevertheless to seek uniform 'tribal' standards of customary succession. This trend was encouraged by the publication of W.H. Rattigan's *Digest of the Civil Law for the Punjab* in 1880, which ran eventually to 13 editions and 'considerably unified the customary law of the Punjab.'⁹ This was encouraged as well by the tendency of a number of prominent Punjab judges, notably Sir Meredyth Plowden and Sir Charles Roe, to elaborate in their decisions an 'agnatic theory' of custom based on the assumption that the exclusion of daughters from inheritance by male collaterals could be taken as a basic judicial presumption even in the absence of positive custom. An extensive study of cases would be necessary to determine the actual effects of the application of this theory, but its formulation reflected the growing elaboration in the late 19th century of customary law as a normative system, at the center of which were inheritance rules relating to women. The recording of custom was tied, in other words, to a theory of society, with the position of women at its heart, which shaped and justified the structure of colonial rule.

⁹ Alan Gledhill, 'The Compilation of Customary Law . . .', p. 140. Rattigan himself saw the *Digest* as the forerunner of a future customary law code, W.H. Rattigan, *A Digest of Civil Law for the Punjab*, 13th ed. (Allahabad: University Book Agency, 1953), pp. xiv–xvi.

Not all British officials and judges fully accepted this view, of course, and many criticized the assumptions implicit in the normative theory of female exclusion from inheritance that had shaped the ‘agnatic theory’ of Punjabi custom. On one level, criticism focused on the anomaly inherent in the process of attempting to apply general theory to the interpretation of specific local and ‘tribal’ custom. As Lahore High Court Justice LeRossignol noted, the Privy Council had, in its own definition of custom, declared that custom was ‘whatever is *proved* to be the active custom.’ And yet the Chief Court of Punjab had, by using general theory and the logic of analogy, extended the scope of custom not through the collection of examples, but by ‘logical process.’ ‘To call custom a rule which is not proved to have ever been applied, but which can only be deduced logically,’ he declared, ‘is a contradiction in terms and misuse of language.’¹⁰ The extent to which this process had operated to produce standards of law for female inheritance that altogether transcended local practice was criticized by some Punjabi agriculturalist leaders themselves. As Mian Muhammad Shafi pointed out, under the ‘agnatic theory,’ daughters had sometimes been excluded from inheritance by male collaterals whose relationship was so distant that it was beyond the range of Punjabi kinship terminology. ‘Being an agriculturalist and a lawyer’ himself, Shafi said in 1915, he felt ‘that the theory of agnatic succession had been carried too far by Sir Meredyth Plowden and Sir Charles Roe. The fact that there is no Punjabi word for an ancestor beyond a great-great-grandfather,’ was significant. It was an indication, Shafi implied, of the limits beyond which the ‘agnatic theory’ could not be pressed.¹¹

The most critical challenge to the ‘agnatic theory,’ however, was based on concerns which were at root political, and which were tied to basic British perceptions about the broader nature of their role in India

¹⁰ Note by the Hon’ble Mr. Justice W.A. LeRossignol, 16 September 1915, printed in *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, p. 36.

¹¹ *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, p. 19. Shafi’s concern was subsequently legislatively recognized with the passage of the Punjab Custom (Power to Contest) Act of 1920, which barred suits to block alienations by any agnate not descended at minimum from a common great-great-grandfather. A.A.K. Lodhi, *Customary Law of the Punjab* (Lahore: Caravan Book House, 1963), pp. 84–85.

as a whole. The most basic objection after 1900 came from British officials who believed that social change, brought about by the British themselves, had made any attempt to apply a stereotypical 'agnatic' interpretation of customary law increasingly contrary to other progressive trends in British administration—trends that could also be measured by changes in the status of women. As the Montgomery Sessions Judge, L.H. Leslie-Jones, thus declared, echoing the comments of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Robert Egerton,

there are many influences, among which may be included the security of life and property, at work to dissipate the force of [the] agnatic bond and to disintegrate the village community, and we must anticipate the day when the desire for greater individual freedom of disposition and liberality towards females will cause men to look askance at the customs which served their purpose well enough in times of insecurity and unrest.¹²

Faced with such influences, many felt that any unduly rigid interpretation of custom could only be counterproductive. As High Court Justice Sir Frederick Robertson put it in 1907, 'the rights of women' had, 'in the opinion of many . . . suffered unduly of late years under the too universal application of the "agnatic theory".'¹³

Such comments underscored a fundamental tension in the framework for British colonial control in the Punjab, of which the legal status of women in inheritance became a critical marker. Many British officials saw 'customary law' as a marker of their own rationalizing abilities in systematizing the rules of indigenous society in order to better control it—and in this the subordination of women was central. This made some uncomfortable, as it seemed to fly in the face of their own visions of social 'progress' linked to the advance of individualism and freedom. Nevertheless, the political imperatives of control reflected in the state's elaboration of customary law, in the end trumped the uncertainties that marked some British thinking. As W.H. Rattigan thus expressed it, it may be true that there are internal silently operating powers which in all societies make for change and for the

¹² Note by Mr. L.B. Leslie-Jones, printed in *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, p. 36.

¹³ Note by the Hon'ble Mr. F. Robertson entitled, 'Suggestions Regarding Codification of Customary Law,' 11 April 1907, printed in *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, p. 86.

transmutation of a set of ideas, based upon tribal or family ownership, into another and a totally different conception of the rights of property based upon individualistic theories. But, unless I am egregiously mistaken, it is not the policy of our administration to further or hasten this change. . . . Although we may not be able to stop altogether this current of individualistic thought from slowly undermining the foundation on which village property is based, it is within our power to retard and weaken this destructive process.¹⁴

Rattigan's statement, though certainly not accepted by all, captured well the dominant judicial view during this period when the Punjab's system of customary law was being forged. The inheritance rights of women were mortgaged, in theory, to wider political concerns underlying the development of the legal system of the Punjab. The denial of inheritance rights to women, in fact, became symbolic of the solidity of the kin-based political foundations of the British colonial state.

Custom vs. *Shariat*: The Law, Women and Politics

For the British, kinship structure and the position of women had become more than a curiosity for ethnographers; it came to be linked to the ideological foundations of their rule. As far as the rights of women were concerned, this proved to be of signal importance. Though in practice inheritance patterns affecting women continued to vary considerably,¹⁵ the legal system in the late 19th and early 20th

¹⁴ Note by Sir William Rattigan, 26 December, 1897, printed in *Report . . . of Customary Law Conference*, p. 36.

¹⁵ Though the British themselves were aware of wide variations in custom, this did not stop their frequent efforts to analyze customs in terms of general principles. A good example is provided by the case of N. Hancock Prenter who undertook a survey of custom in central Punjab in 1920. 'At first sight,' he wrote, 'it would appear . . . that the proverbial attachment to tribal custom is a myth, and that no people in the world show such disregard for custom as the Punjab agriculturalists. It appears to a superficial examiner of the material collected that our thousands of instances are nearly all exceptions to the apparently established rule of agnatic succession. . . .' Such observations, however, did not prevent Prenter from generalizing that 'the principles on which the customs are based are more or less common to all the

centuries increasingly denied women the right to inherit property, not just because local practice in many parts of the Punjab had traditionally denied them this right, but because this denial had become an element of ideological importance to many British jurists and administrators in defining the foundations of British rule.

In succeeding years, this ideology was challenged from various sides. Prominent among the challengers of the colonial system were many urban Punjabi Muslims, whose criticism was directed not just at the presence of the British as alien colonial rulers, but more fundamentally, at the rural 'tribal' structure of authority which supported the British regime. Central to the concerns of these critics was the definition of a transcendent religious basis for political solidarity, which would transcend the ties of kinship. It was, in fact, no accident that these Muslim critics of British rule were concentrated in the cities, where the political influence of kinship had weakened under the British and where 'individualism' was strongest. Their criticism of the British regime reflected not just the rise of the increasing 'individualism' that many British officials themselves had foreseen, but also a new political view of society and the state based on an ideological commitment to Islam rather than on the ties of kinship and 'tribe.' Such a view was perhaps most eloquently expressed by Sir Muhammad Iqbal. 'As a cultural movement Islam rejects the old static view of the universe,' he wrote, 'and reaches a dynamic view. As an emotional system of unification it recognizes the worth of the individual as such, and rejects blood-relationship as a basis of human unity. Blood-relationship is earth-rootedness,' he declared. Transcending kinship, Islam sought ideally to provide 'a purely psychological foundation of human unity. . . .'¹⁶

It should be little surprise that this too focused critical attention and debate on the status of women. The centrality of questions of women's inheritance can be seen in ensuing debates on the relationship between customary law, as developed by the British, and the principles of the *shariat*, or Muslim law. For some Muslim reformers who were critical of the structure of 'tribal' authority under the British, nothing

agriculturalist tribes of the block.' Punjab Civil Secretariat Archives, hereafter cited as PCSA, B procs., Home (Judicial), File 262, 1923.

¹⁶ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1971), p. 146.

was more central to the definition of a collective Muslim identity than the spread of adherence to the *shariat*, which was symbolic of a primary commitment to the Muslim community (as discussed in Chapter 1). Given the centrality of women's inheritance issues in the British elaboration of customary law as a normative system, it is little wonder that for many reformers the question of women's inheritance became the touchstone of contrast between custom and *shariat*, an arena in which *shariat* and custom were, as one observer put it, 'in direct uncompromising conflict.'¹⁷ In sharp contrast to their position under customary law, daughters were, under the *shariat*, guaranteed a share in landed inheritance (though a lesser share than sons). For those attacking the colonial regime from an Islamic perspective, the question of female inheritance was thus an ideological issue of first importance.

This was expressed in the early 20th century in widespread urban criticism of the inheritance rules for women under customary law. As the *Paisa Akhbar* admitted in 1915, 'it is undoubtedly true that many Muhammadan agriculturalists and landlords do not, through ignorance, leave land to their daughters.'¹⁸ But acceptance of this as the basis of an officially recognized system of law was, the newspaper declared, totally unacceptable and a betrayal of the normative order of Islam itself. '. . . Religious law is so complete in its treatment of questions of inheritance,' the *Vakil* of Amritsar editorialized, 'that no secular law could replace it.'¹⁹ As a political issue, the question of guaranteeing a share of inheritance to daughters was for many reformers central to the formation of Muslim solidarity. As a pamphlet asked of Muslims in 1916, 'When you consider the command of your Prophet as nothing as compared with usages and customs and you utter blasphemy even before the court and say that you are bound by custom and that you have no faith in *shariat*, how can you expect intercession from your Prophet?'²⁰

¹⁷ Statement of M. Ahmed Khan, Tahsildar of Kharian Tahsil. PCSA, Home (Judicial). File 20, October 1936.

¹⁸ *Paisa Akhbar* (Lahore). September 18, 1915. Report on Newspapers and Periodicals in the Punjab, 1915, no. 38.

¹⁹ *Vakil* (Amritsar), 23 October 1915. Report on Newspapers . . . , 1915, no. 43.

²⁰ *Lamaat* (Lahore), April 2–3, 1916. Report on Newspapers . . . , 1916, no. 15.

The difference between custom and *shariat* was thus perceived by many reformers as a moral issue closely related to the basic foundations of the political system. In practical social terms, however, one cannot press the contrast between custom and *shariat* for the individual Muslim too far. For many rural Muslims, *shariat* and custom were hardly perceived as sharply opposing systems. If *shariat* was for many reformers perceived as the touchstone of a system defined by self-conscious personal commitment to Islam, in which the treatment of daughters was key, it too was adapted to patrilineal kinship and local structures of community in a variety of ways. As J.N.D. Anderson has written, the *shariat* itself had grown out of the agnatic system of tribal inheritance in pre-Islamic Arabia, and though this had been ‘radically modified by the Sunnis as a result of the revelations of early Islam,’²¹ considerations of kin-based solidarity—and control over women—continued to play an important part in its actual working as well. Though daughters were guaranteed a partial share in inheritance, therefore, this by no means represented a complete rejection of the political view of women as links in ‘tribal’ kinship organization. Such a view was embodied not only in inheritance law, but in the law of pre-emption, which was as much a part of Muslim law as it was of Punjabi custom, and was intended to insure the social integrity of local kinship groups. One urban Muslim notable observed at the beginning of the 20th century that the law of pre-emption was ‘one of the most important institutions of Islam, established by social, religious and political necessities of the country,’ and much needed ‘in a country in which different creeds and races abound . . .’²² Considerations of the rights of the individual, whether male or female, were in such legal constructs clearly subordinate to the practical requirements of maintaining the integrity of local kinship groups.²³

²¹ J.N.D. Anderson, ‘The Eclipse of the Patriarchal Family in Contemporary Islamic Law,’ in J.N.D. Anderson, ed., *Family Law in Asia and Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 222.

²² Note by Nasir Ali, Honorary Magistrate, Delhi, 1 October 1910, PBR, File 441/ 212 B.

²³ As several authors point out, pre-emption in rural Punjab was more strictly a ‘village’ than a ‘tribal’ institution. See, for example, Rattigan, *Digest of Civil Law* . . . p. 921. Its intent, however, like the ‘agnatic

In fact, tension between customary law and *shariat* can perhaps best be understood—particularly in relation to everyday social practice, as opposed to state ideology—in terms of the relationship between inheritance rules and differing forms of patrilineal kinship organization and marriage practice among Muslims in the Punjab. C.L. Tupper had observed in his original attempt at formulating the principles of customary law that the whole structure of the ‘tribal’ system in Punjab was based on extensive patterns of marriage, which bound large numbers of Punjabis together in ‘tribal’ categories often transcending the bounds of immediately traceable kinship. It was, in fact, this system which gave central theoretical significance to the common denial of inheritance to women, for such a denial was essential in an extensive marriage system in order to preserve the integrity of family and village property. The rules of inheritance under the *shariat*, on the other hand, were commonly associated in the eyes of many colonial administrators with Muslims who adhered to patterns of marriage based on preferred parallel cousin endogamy. This pattern kept property, even when inherited by daughters, within the localized kinship group.

There is little doubt that, in actual practice, such patterns were more prominent in the 19th and early 20th centuries among higher status urban Muslims, and were seen, at least in the eyes of some, as related to commitment to ‘purer’ forms of Islam. In political terms, it might even be argued that the extensive kin-based political ties of the ‘tribal’ system, which were so important to the structuring of the British administration, were replaced within the framework of such kinship structures by narrower kinship bonds, which were in turn related to a larger vision of community, transcending kinship, linked to an idealized vision of Islamic community. Such connections are highly speculative, but it is less speculative to suggest that there were indeed links between marriage patterns and attitudes toward *shariat* rules of female inheritance.

In fact, little research has been done on the actual extent of such marriage patterns in the Punjab in the 19th and 20th centuries. But the available evidence suggests that patterns of preferred parallel cousin marriage were hardly confined entirely to urban areas, and probably

theory’ of customary succession, was to prevent land from passing out of a corporate group to strangers.

extended to parts of rural western Punjab in the late 19th century—and may indeed have become more important in the 20th. Tupper himself, in spite of his insistence on the theoretical importance of extensive tribally-based marriage patterns, published evidence in his customary law treatise indicating that among such prominent central Punjabi Jat clans as the Chhattah and Tarar, Muslims were in the late 19th century ‘much addicted to marriages of close affinity within the clan.’²⁴ As one western Punjab Settlement Officer suggested in 1901, ‘Muhammadan Law,’ though generally ignored in matters of inheritance, had ‘had such a strong effect as regards the question of intermarriage of relations that it has entirely abrogated the rule forbidding intermarriage of agnates, and such intermarriages are everywhere very common; indeed it is thought preferable that a man should marry his cousin.’²⁵ Later evidence collected in a sample survey at the time of the 1921 census showed that the incidence of cousin marriage in the Punjab ranged from as high as 60 percent among Muslims surveyed in Attock District to 11 percent among the Muslims sampled in Delhi.²⁶ Though such evidence hardly provides an empirical foundation for challenging the predominance of the extensive marriage patterns emphasized by Tupper, it does suggest that social foundations may already have existed in the Punjab for an interpretation of inheritance far different from the ‘agnatic theory’ of customary law that had come to dominate judicial interpretation in late 19th-century British courts. In such a situation, one might interpret the movement toward the *shariat* not as a rejection of the political importance of kinship, but as just one manifestation of an indigenous reaction against the attempt to elaborate existing ‘custom’ within a single theoretical mold.

²⁴ Tupper, *Punjab Customary Law*, Vol. II, p. 200.

²⁵ W.S. Talbot, *General Code of Tribal Custom in the Jhelum District of the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil & Military Gazette Press, 1901), p. 3.

²⁶ For first cousins only, the respective percentages for Attock and Delhi were 42 percent and 7 percent. *Census of India*, 1921, vol. XV (Punjab and Delhi), p. 260. The political importance of changing patterns of parallel cousin marriage among rural notables in 20th century Punjab is analyzed in Emily Hodges, ‘The Pir, the Faqir and the Industrialist,’ unpublished paper presented to the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 1978.

Whatever the validity of such an interpretation, however, it can only hint at the critical political implications of the challenge to custom—and the symbolic importance of women's inheritance—in the politics of 20th century Punjab. The greatest significance of this challenge derived not from the social origins of the law, but rather from its relationship to the ideology of the state. Kinship patterns were undoubtedly an element in structuring the inheritance law of the *shariat*, but the moral imperative of the *shariat* did not derive from its support for a particular form of kinship. Rather, the significance of the *shariat* grew from the ideological commitment it implied to a type of political solidarity that, as Iqbal had put it, explicitly transcended kinship. Support for the *shariat* was thus symbolically important in Muslim Punjab as a call for a new political order, a new foundation for the state to replace the colonial ideology of the British. The political significance of women's inheritance thus lay not just in its relationship to with different forms of kinship and local organization, but in its relationship to with the normative order of 'tribal' solidarity that the British had elaborated in order to ground their state in a particular vision of colonial 'society'.

By the 1920s, some urban, well-educated Muslim women had already begun to agitate for improvements in female inheritance law.²⁷ But the more general, politically-motivated pressure for legal reform soon proved far more important in drawing attention to the issue. This was underscored in the early 1930s when Malik Muhammad Din, a member of the Punjab Legislative Council from Lahore, introduced a bill in the Council which called explicitly for the supersessions of custom by Muslim personal law.²⁸ Though Malik

²⁷ The concern of educated Muslim women with inheritance rights under the *shariat* is suggested in Gail Minault, 'Sisterhood or Separatism: The All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference and the Nationalist Movement,' in Gail Minault, ed., *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1981).

²⁸ Shortly before the drafting of Malik Muhammad Din's bill, Sir Umar Hyat Khan Tiwana had arranged the passage in the Council of a bill, the Kalra Impartible Estate Bill, establishing the succession to the Kalra estate by primogeniture. Malik Muhammad Din's bill was a reaction to this. *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, vol. 19 (1931), pp. 788–92, vol. 20 (1931), pp. 61–78, 120–33, 183–205. This bill has been discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

Muhammad Din pointed to the need for improved female inheritance rights as a major justification for the bill, it quickly became clear that very soon the larger issues were linked to the position of the Unionist party in the Punjab as the political inheritor of the British definition of a 'tribal' foundation for state power. Discussions of women's inheritance rights were inextricably linked to the political role of customary law in defining political power in the Punjab.

This was readily apparent in the Punjab government's analysis of the bill. Under customary law, the government's Legal Remembrancer observed, women had been viewed only as conduits for land to pass from generation to generation, not as actual owners of land, the theoretical disposition of which vested in the 'tribe'.²⁹ Under the *shariat*, however, the assumptions affecting the disposition of land were to be changed drastically, with potentially dramatic impact on the structure of rural society—for the implication was that women would be able to claim land as individuals. As the British discovered when they circulated the bill for opinions from the districts, many rural Punjabi Muslims thus viewed the establishment of female inheritance rights under the *shariat* as a threat to the entire structure of rural 'tribal' authority. The Muslim *tahsildar* of Kharian Tahsil declared that 'to abrogate the tribal law altogether by one stroke of the pen and thereby substitute the Muhammadan Law instead would not only be impracticable under the circumstances but would completely disintegrate the homogeneity of the agricultural tribe.'³⁰ This view was echoed by other rural Muslim leaders. Daughters could be provided for through dowry, a Jat leader of Gujrat District declared, but if they were guaranteed shares in the land according to *shariat*, then the Land Alienation Act would be undermined and the agriculturalists would be ruined.³¹

²⁹ 'Custom,' he wrote, 'is not uniform, but in the great majority of families, it is founded on the axiom that the real owner of the land is the "tribe," so that finally the land passes to the reversioners, who have power to control the disposition of the land by the member of the tribe in possession. . . .' PCSA, Home (Judicial), File 20, October 1936.

³⁰ Statement of M. Ahmed Khan, *tahsildar* of Kharian Tahsil. PCSA, Home (Judicial).

³¹ Statement of Chaudhri Bahawal Bakhsh, president, Zamindara League, Gujrat. PCSA, Home (Judicial) File 20, October 1936.

Not all rural Muslims opposed the bill, of course, for few Muslims were willing to openly oppose the holy *shariat*. Some pointed to an already increasing tendency toward adherence to the *shariat*, both among the better-educated and among those Muslims who adhered to preferred parallel cousin patterns of marriage. Some even suggested that changes in inheritance law itself might push Muslims away from the exogamous marriage patterns to which Tupper had attached so much importance in elaborating the theoretical foundations of customary law. As one Lahore District *zaildar* argued, the spread of 'education and propaganda' might also lead to changes in Muslim marriage patterns, encouraging more intensive marriage within the family, and thus facilitating more general acceptance of *shariat*.³² One leading Muslim observed that the bill in itself served as a potential incentive to encourage closer degrees of endogamy, a warning to Muslims 'to be cautious in marrying their daughters.'³³

But among most Muslims offering opinions on the bill, such considerations were secondary to the overall political implications of the measure for Unionist power. The leaders of the Unionist Party opposed the bill on grounds that reflected their own concern for maintaining the 'tribal' system underlying their authority. This concern was also reflected in the comments of the provincial government: 'The Governor in Council considers that the bill is dangerous to the general economic structure of the province as a whole, and to the interests of the rural Muslim community in particular.'³⁴

Malik Muhammad Din's bill was quietly blocked by the Unionists and never allowed to reach a division in the Punjab Council, but the issues that the bill brought to the fore nevertheless continued to agitate Muslim politics. After 1935, the newly rejuvenated Muslim League increasingly provided leadership for community-minded Muslims who supported adherence to the *shariat*, and in 1937, the League's all-India leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, carried the fight for the supremacy of

³² Statement of M. Hidayat Ali, *zaildar* of Gharyala (Lahore). PCSA, Home Judicial, File 20, October 1936.

³³ Statement of K.B. Nawab Umardraz Ali Khan of Karnal, PCSA., Home (Judicial), File 20, October 1936.

³⁴ Note by S.L. Sale, Sec. to Govt., Punjab Legislative Dept., PCSA, Home (Judicial),

the *shariat* in matters of personal law into the Central Legislative Assembly.³⁵ Once again, as in the debate in Punjab, the question of women's rights played an important part in the call for support of the *shariat*, but the issue remained, even in the Central Assembly, largely symbolic. Though well-educated women remained active in the fight for inheritance rights at the all-India level,³⁶ the key issues in the fight for the *shariat* centred on the challenge to the structure of political authority posed by the adoption of Muslim law in provinces such as the Punjab where customary law was important. It was, in fact, with regard to the Punjab that the controversy was greatest. Lahore High Court Justice Din Muhammad noted that many rural leaders in the Punjab continued to be wary of the *shariat* because they feared that in allowing an inheritance share to daughters, the *shariat* would '...cut at the root of the system under which they were living . . .'.³⁷

Showing the political skill that was his trademark, Jinnah was able to steer the bill successfully through the Assembly in spite of this opposition, thus enacting the first Shariat Act covering all Indian Muslims.³⁸ But the compromises he had to make to secure the bill's passage dramatized the continuing contradictions inherent in the issue. For Jinnah, the passage of an all-India Shariat Act was of immense symbolic importance, for it demonstrated legislatively the commitment of all India's Muslims to an Islamic moral system. But with political power in the Punjab still tied to the 'tribal' structure of the British administration, even Jinnah could not in practice challenge directly the power of Punjab's rural magnates. Jinnah's success in securing passage of the bill was achieved only with extensive compromises on

³⁵ The original impetus for a central Shariat Bill did not come from Jinnah, but from Muslim reformist religious leaders of the Punjab. The bill was originally introduced in the Central Legislature by Hafiz Abdullah of Lyallpur and had the support of the Jamiat-i Ulama-i Hind. Jinnah, however, took over the legislative leadership of the fight for the bill in 1937. Tahir Mahmood, *Muslim Personal Law* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1977), p. 29.

³⁶ Tahir Mahmood, *Muslim Personal Law*, pp. 29–30.

³⁷ Opinion of Justice Din Mohammad, NAI, Home (Judicial), File 36/17/35/Judl.

³⁸ Jinnah's parliamentary role in securing passage of this act is detailed in Mohammad Jafar, I.A. Rehman and Ghani Jafar, eds, *Jinnah as a Parliamentarian* (Islamabad: Azfar Associates, 1977) pp. 229–331.

precisely those aspects of Muslim law that appeared to threaten the power of the Unionists and the British. On the critical question of the inheritance of agricultural land the bill was altogether silent, for this was a subject reserved for legislation by provincial governments and was thus beyond the scope of the bill in the Central Assembly. Even with regard to those issues covered by the bill, however, Jinnah by no means pushed the *shariat* to its logical conclusion. Adherence to the *shariat* in matters of adoption, wills, and legacies was left by Jinnah's compromises wholly to the discretion of individual Muslims, in spite of the vigorous objections raised by scholars of religious law.³⁹ Whatever the symbolic value of the *shariat*, therefore, Jinnah could not hope in 1937 to push through a bill which would transform the legal system entirely, at least as long as the structure of political authority in provinces like the Punjab remained rooted in the 'tribal' colonial administration.

The effects of the 1937 Shariat Application Act were thus extremely limited. Punjabi reformers who were explicitly concerned with women's rights, such as K.L. Gauba and Baji Rashida Latif, pressed repeatedly in the late 1930s and early 1940s for provincial legislation to extend the scope of the Shariat Act and to guarantee female rights of inheritance. Such legislation stood little chance in an assembly that continued to be dominated by the Unionist Party. As one British official noted of a bill to extend the coverage of the *shariat* to include succession to agricultural property, 'It seems certain that a Bill of this type is not really wanted by the vast majority of Muslims in the Punjab. The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, goes far enough—some people would probably think too far.'⁴⁰ Whether 'the vast majority of Muslims' really opposed the extension of the *shariat* is impossible to say, but it is clear from such attitudes that any substantive change in inheritance law as it affected women was impossible as long as the colonial structure of authority endured.

Only with the emergence of Pakistan as an independent state did the transformation prefigured by the Shariat Application Act of 1937 actually begin to occur. With the Muslim League's defeat of the

³⁹ Tahir Mahmood, *Muslim Personal Law*, pp. 31–32.

⁴⁰ View of A.V. Askwith, PCSA, B. Procs., Home (Judicial), File 499, 1939.

Unionist Party in the elections of 1946 and the departure of the British in 1947, the old colonial system in the Punjab finally collapsed. This signalled a revolution in the nature of authority—a revolution not in the structure of the administration, but in the moral foundations of the state. Though the ‘tribal’ structure of rural authority remained intact in many areas, the end of British rule brought an immediate and dramatic change in the relationship between kinship and the state. This change provided the foundation for the substantive changes in the legal system that reformers had long advocated. By the West Punjab Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1948, the system of customary law which the British had developed over a century was, at a stroke, almost wholly superseded. The act declared ‘in all questions regarding succession (including succession to agricultural land) . . . , the rule of decision in cases where the parties are Muslims shall be the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat).’⁴¹

For women, the emergence of Pakistan thus finally presented new possibilities regarding landed inheritance. But to understand the nature of the transformation which had taken place, it is necessary to see it within the context of the political changes accompanying the emergence of a new state. The significance of the emergence of Pakistan for women lay not in the commitment of the founders of Pakistan to women’s rights, or even to the *shariat* as such, but rather in their commitment to the establishment of a state based upon an ideology of Islamic solidarity rather than upon indigenous ‘tribal’ kinship structures. In practical terms, the inheritance rights of women continued to be limited by many complex issues, but changes in the nature of the state had brought basic changes in the way women were legally viewed. Freed from the political necessity of maintaining the solidity of the ‘agricultural tribes,’ inheritance laws for women could begin to evolve in ways which reflected not only the dictates of the *shariat*, but a concern for individual equity as well.

⁴¹ Lodhi, *Customary Law of the Punjab*, p. 90.

Part II

Religion and the Public Sphere

Democracy, Nationalism and the Public: A Speculation on Colonial Muslim Politics

Historians of Indian nationalism for decades have pointed to the emergence of ‘public opinion’ and an emerging ‘public voice’ among the English-educated middle class in India as a critical element in the emergence of Indian nationalism. Drawing on the work of Habermas and others, some have recently sought to define more rigorously the elements that shaped a distinctive ‘public sphere’ in India, and how these elements differed from those that defined the 18th- and 19th century European experience. Central to these efforts has been a concern to define the ways that the distinctive structure of the colonial state in India shaped distinctive forms of ‘public’ opinion and activity—including ‘democratic’ and ‘nationalist’ activity—in ways that distinguish the Indian experience from any model shaped by the experience in Europe.

This chapter looks at such concerns as the starting point for a general (and thus somewhat schematic) consideration of the development of a distinctly Muslim public in India (with particular reference to the Punjab) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is the argument here that without some consideration of an emerging ‘public’, it is impossible to analyze the impact of electoral ‘democracy’, or the emergence of Muslim ‘nationalism’, on Muslim politics. It is also the argument that the meaning of ‘public’ has to be understood in Indian colonial politics not primarily in contrast to the sphere of the ‘private’, but in contrast to the sphere of the ‘particular’, a distinction given special meaning by the unique structure of the colonial state in India.¹ Indeed, the significance of this will be evident

¹ For a summary of Habermas’s western European model of an emerging 18th century ‘public sphere’, see Jurgen Habermas, ‘The Public Sphere: An

if we turn immediately to the nature of electoral ‘democracy’ as introduced into India by the British.

The meanings of ‘democracy’ in India have been strongly conditioned by the historical origins of India’s representative electoral institutions within the political structure of British colonial India. The introduction of ‘democratic’ electoral institutions was influenced, at least in part, by the spread of 19th-century liberal ideas from Europe. But of far more immediate practical importance in the introduction of electoral institutions into India was the influence of a ‘colonial sociology’ that shaped the ways that the British colonial state sought to sink its roots into Indian society. As Bernard Cohn and others have argued, the British justified their authority in India (particularly in the second half of the 19th century) by ordering and systematizing a society composed of innumerable, parochial ‘cultures’ and ‘communities’. While colonial power remained rooted in bureaucratic and military power, the state’s hold over society rested both on its recognition and protection of these communities, *and* on its claim to the superior, ‘scientific’ knowledge, which allowed the state alone to order these communities into a rationalized political whole. Such communities might include both those based on genealogical reckoning (caste, tribe, etc.) and those based on religion; but all tended to be defined, in essence, as particularistic groups—that is, groups whose principles of internal organization and definition offered no potential challenge—no alternative, universal principle of ordering to the rationalized, scientific authority of the colonial state.

The establishment of this sphere of the particular played a vital role also in shaping the introduction of electoral institutions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Whatever other principles may have been at work, the British introduction of electoral representation into India represented one means by which the British sought to manipulate the political definition of particularistic ‘communities’ and draw them more fully into the structures of the state in the late 19th and 20th

Encyclopedia Article (1964), *New German Critique*, vol. 3 (Fall 1974) pp. 49–55. For Habermas, the ‘public sphere’ was an arena of reasoned discussion—open, theoretically, to all equally—that developed between the state and an emerging private, individual, domestic realm. The opposition between ‘private’ and ‘public’ was thus central to the emergence of the concept.

centuries. The introduction of local and provincial elections grew in part, as Anil Seal has argued, from the practical requirements of maintaining support as the Raj penetrated more deeply into Indian society in the later 19th century in order to increase its revenues. As the state adopted an increasingly intrusive presence in local society, it sought to legitimate its position by using nominations and elections to committees, councils, boards and legislatures to draw local elites more fully into its orbit.² Though this represented in part a response to pressure from educated Indians, the central concern of the British was the maintenance of the underlying structure of the Raj. The growth of electoral representation, whatever its potential implications for the future, thus did not emerge in the context of a developing bourgeois public sphere—as it did in late 18th- and 19th-century Europe—but rather as a mechanism by which the state sought more effectively to encompass a society composed of innumerable particularistic communities. In defining the state's relationship to local society, the vision of India as a 'conglomeration of local communities'—held in place by a scientific state structure—continued to be central.

The implications of this for the meaning of representation are critical if we are to discuss the relationship of Islam and democracy. The history of Islam as a universal religion bequeathed to the Muslim community a somewhat ambivalent place in British ordering of India's particularistic communities, but the structure of colonial representation nevertheless tended to define a vision of Muslim community that fitted the particularistic structure of colonial India. The importance of Muslim identity as a central element in this fabric was underscored by the early introduction into India of separate Muslim electorates. Separate electorates recognized the distinctiveness and historical importance of a Muslim 'community', and acknowledged as well the desire for separate representation among some prominent Muslim leaders. But to be a Muslim for purposes of separate electorates required no particular statement of principle or belief. Instead, 'objective' census considerations, by far the most important of which was descent, determined who would count as a Muslim. As embodied

² Anil Seal, 'Imperialism' and Nationalism in India,' in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal, eds, *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics, 1870–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 9–10.

in separate electorates, the Muslim community thus became, like ‘castes’ and ‘tribes’, a fixed, particularistic community that could be easily encompassed within the structure of the colonial order. Nothing marked this more clearly than the prohibition in colonial election law against the use of threats of ‘divine displeasure’ in public electioneering. To ‘induce a candidate or voter to believe that he . . . will be rendered an object of divine displeasure or spiritual censure’ was officially defined in British election law as a corrupt electoral practice. This law had its origins in the United Kingdom, where the concern was to prevent the exercise of religious ‘undue influence’ on the free choice of the individual voter within the ‘public sphere’. But within the context of the emerging electoral system in India, it took on a very different significance, for here the importance of religious affiliation had already been officially recognized through separate electorates as a key, constituent element in the structure of the representative system. To bar any appeal to ‘divine displeasure’ or ‘spiritual censure’ was thus to define, in this context, a particular kind of religious community. Obedience to God’s will (or to the *shariat*) had no legitimate place in defining Muslim identity as it was encompassed in separate electorates. Indeed, such laws carried clear implications for the political meaning of ‘Muslim community’ within the context of India’s ‘democratic’ political institutions. Within the structure of the colonial political system, religion thus was defined essentially as a form of particularistic identity—an identity unconnected with the assertion of any universal principles for individual behavior or for the definition of the larger political system.³

Critically, this had implications also for the colonial structure of Muslim political leadership. Separate electorates implied, as Farzana Shaikh has put it, a form of ‘descriptive’ rather than ‘substantive’ representation, a system in which representatives gained legitimacy not for their substantive ability to represent a constituency, but rather for the formal correspondence between their own identification and that of the state-defined ‘community’ to be represented.⁴ For many Muslim leaders, this structure of representation provided a means by

³ For further development of this idea, see Chapter 7.

⁴ Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 90.

which a variety of forms of local wealth, status and power could be translated into legitimate leadership within the structure of state power. Muslims as various as merchants in Bombay, landlords in the United Provinces, 'tribal' leaders in the Punjab, and *pirs* in Sind all claimed the same political status as 'Muslim' leaders. Indeed, privileged descent, wealth, and landed status, were all transformed, through separate electorates, into foundations for 'natural' leadership of the state-defined Muslim community. Though the practical roots of local power might be divorced from personal Islamic behaviour and embedded in diverse forms of local influence, the state's formal definition of the community through separate electorates enabled these leaders, as politically influential Muslims, to claim a legitimate place within the state structure as leaders of an 'objectively' defined Muslim 'community'.

This is not in any way to suggest, of course, that these Muslim leaders took this formal, 'objective' definition of community (as expressed in the structure of separate electorates) to be a full expression of the nature of Muslim consciousness. To the contrary, as the work of many historians has shown, the period of British rule was one of widespread educational, religious and intellectual reform among Muslims in India, marked by powerful new emphases on education and personal reform as key markers of Muslim identity. Nevertheless, the very prominence of such movements among influential Muslims (including those who profited from separate electorates) suggests another critical feature of the colonial structure: a tendency toward the definition of separate 'political' and 'cultural' realms in the delineation of Muslim community and identity. As colonial rulers, the British had self-consciously sought to separate religious ideology from political power. With roots in this context, the most powerful movements of reform (particularly among the ulama and the old *ashraf* elites) focused on the definition of the Muslim community—as a cultural entity—outside the state-supported political realm.

Such reforms were various and were not of course shaped wholly by Muslim responses to the structure of colonial rule; they drew on far older traditions of Islamic discourse. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the dramatic 19th-century reforms among the ulama, who, at Deoband and elsewhere, drew heavily on the reformist tradition of Shah Waliullah. But such reforms were strongly adapted

also to British colonial rule in that they focused on definitions of community linked to the spreading reform of personal religious practice and to the assertion of personal cultural identity independent of the structure of state power. Perhaps most noteworthy in this connection was the transformation of the meaning of the *shariat*, or Islamic law, during this period, as described by historians such as Gregory Kozlowski.⁵ For many, and not just among the ulama, personal adherence to *shariat* took on increasing importance as a mark of community identity. But the *shariat* during the colonial period (as developed both in the British courts and among the ulama) itself took on the increasingly pronounced character of a system of ‘personal law’—a system of law dealing with a realm of behavior almost entirely separated from, and opposed to, the realm of political life. Such a tendency in the development of *shariat* had roots extending back into Islamic history well before the colonial era. But the meaning of *shariat* as a system of ‘personal’ law (in which issues regarding family, inheritance and women assumed particular importance) was increasingly marked as a touchstone of community that operated outside the realm of state-oriented politics.

Indeed, much the same sort of argument could be made for the educational reform movement centered on Aligarh. Though the reforms of Sir Sayyid, and most other so-called ‘modernists’, were intended to facilitate cooperation with the British colonial state, they also aimed at the ‘cultural’ definition of Islamic community in an arena largely independent of state authority. These reforms in fact were intended to preserve the local prestige and power of the *ashraf*, which was rooted in privileged descent, even as they sought increasingly to fuse this local power with a broader ‘cultural’ definition of Muslim community—instilled at institutions such as Aligarh—that would justify *ashraf* leadership in extra-local affairs. The tendency, whether at Deoband or at Aligarh, was thus for Muslim leaders to seek new ‘cultural’ definitions of collective identity forged in the realms of ‘community’ life independent of the political structures supporting state authority.

⁵ See, for example, Gregory Kozlowski, ‘Shah Banu’s Case, Britain’s Legal Legacy and Muslim Politics in Modern India,’ in K. Lele, ed., *Boeings and Bullock Carts: Continuity and Change in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Chanakya, 1989).

Drawing on a long history of Islamic discourse, such developments offered at the same time a mechanism for shaping a coherent cultural redefinition of the community in the face of colonial domination.⁶

Perhaps equally important, these cultural re-definitions of Muslim identity in colonial India also located Muslim communal identity squarely within a discourse of rationalized and internalized self-control over the individual. Though Aligarh and Deoband differed in their approach to community in significant ways, they shared a concern in tying the assertion of Muslim 'community' to the spread of education and reformist rationality. Indeed, both educational movements held at their center a concern to define boundaries of 'control' around a Muslim community that was shaped not only in a cultural realm independent of the state, but that was defined by the internalization by individual Muslims of a distinctive 'cultural' identity. With the colonial state providing no symbolic definition of Muslim community in India, the assertion of 'community' solidarity required that the individual Muslim himself bring his (or her) inner life and sense of identity under self-conscious personal and rational control. For many *sharif* Muslims, this required the self-conscious acceptance of a concept of 'culture', rooted in descent and history, and spread by education, that gave substance and legitimacy to a culturally independent Muslim community. To many of the reformist ulama, the internalized control of behavior that increasingly defined the community was even more fundamentally modeled on the triumph of individual rationality (*aql*) over emotion, a process that went hand in hand with the triumph of *shariat* over local custom, and localized kin and caste-based identities.⁷ Individual rationality and self-control were, in fact, central to the whole educational process that sought to define a new sense of Muslim community in colonial India shaped not symbolically by the state, but by self-controlled individuals.

⁶ For excellent accounts of the Deoband and Aligarh movements, see Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) and David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁷ See Barbara Metcalf, 'Islam and Custom in Nineteenth-Century India', *Contributions to Asian Studies*, vol. 17 (1982).

The language of individual rationality was thus central for the establishment of cultural autonomy among colonial Muslims. Clearly some aspects of these movements, with their definition of a 'private' world open to rational control, and their corresponding definition of new forms of 'public' discussion and debate, call to mind the emerging 'public sphere' outlined by Habermas. But the implications of these movements for the definition of a new, public form of political 'community' in colonial India were limited. Though both the Deoband and Aligarh movements made extensive use of printing and the press to disseminate their ideas among increasingly wide circles of Muslims, these movements did not, in themselves, imply a challenge to the structure of colonial political authority, which encapsulated the Muslim community within the larger 'scientific' structure of colonial rule. Indeed, the potential of both the Aligarh and Deoband movements to transcend this encapsulation was sharply limited in the 19th century by the continuing importance in both movements of concepts of authority rooted in the continuing cultural domination of privileged elites. Though holding up a model of rationalized, individual identity as the touchstone of Muslim community, both groups stressed the subordination of the individual to externally provided (if rationalized and internalized) boundaries of control. Whether authority was tied to *sharif* descent and culture or to the interpretation of *shariat*, the movements centered on Aligarh and Deoband both clung to structures of 'community' and authority located not wholly within individual Muslims, but in conceptions of status and knowledge mediated to society by privileged elites. In spite of their emphases on the internalization of identity, neither group could imagine a Muslim community that could exist without its own special claims to authority. Without the ulama, *shariat* would mean nothing; without privileged descent and cultural hierarchy based on *sharafat*, Indian Muslim history and Muslim culture would be unthinkable.

In spite of their emphasis on cultural autonomy, Muslim leaders within both these reform movements thus stressed fixed forms of leadership and authority that fit generally into the structure of ordered particularism and 'descriptive' representation that shaped the overarching political structure of the colonial state. Though they stressed increasing rational control over the 'private' world of Indian Muslims (including women, the domestic realm, the emotions, etc.),

they did not politically transcend the 'particular'.⁸ Nevertheless, the rhetoric of both movements—and, in particular, their reliance on printing—carried implications for the emergence of Muslim movements with more radical implications. As Benedict Anderson and other writers on 'nationalism' have argued, the new sense of public community associated with the emergence of nationalism was frequently linked with the changes in popular thinking accompanying new technologies of communication, particularly those associated with what he calls 'print-capitalism'.⁹ The spread of printing technology created, he argues, new notions among individuals of their interrelationships, not within a grid of relations and of particularistic communities shaped by the state, but within a 'society' composed of autonomous, and constantly interacting, individuals. The notion of autonomous individuals comprising a 'society' gave rise, in Anderson's words, to an 'imagined community, residing in the creative imaginations of each individual. The result was thus the emergence of a conception of community defined not only independently of the state, but also composed of autonomous individuals. Though the early reformers of Aligarh and Deoband remained largely wedded to a structure of particularistic leadership adapted to the colonial structure, their stress on both the dissemination of the printed word and on the internal transformation of the individual pointed the way toward more radical transformations in Muslim thinking.

Critical, in fact, to an understanding of an emerging Muslim 'public' that transcended the particularistic structure of the colonial state was the emergence of a commercial Urdu press in north India rooted primarily in the marketplace rather than in the discourse of reform and the school—a press that ultimately produced idioms of community that differed sharply from those of the reformers of either Aligarh or Deoband. In fact, the connections between the press and reformers are so numerous as to be difficult to disentangle, but the

⁸ For a more sophisticated and nuanced argument relating to these points (though from a different perspective), see Faisal Devji, 'The Movement for Women's Reform in Muslim India, 1857–1900,' *South Asia*, vol. 14, no. 1 (June 1991).

⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

critical point for the analysis here is that for the newspaper editors, publicists and political poets who wrote for commercial publications, it was not primarily the control (or internalized self-control) of the inner life of readers that was the aim. In a commercial world, the individual consumer remained autonomous.¹⁰ The rhetoric of 'community' was increasingly deployed in the press not primarily in the interest of education or rational self-control of the individual, but in the interest of drawing as many readers as possible into the public discourse on which their publications, and the dissemination of their own ideas, depended. Even though the impact of 'consumerism' was extremely limited in Muslim India, therefore, the growing importance of a commercial press signaled the beginnings of critical shifts in communal rhetoric, with the rhetoric of individual autonomy, of inner desires and emotions, assuming critical significance. Central to the 'imagined community' of the new press was not a community bounded by a discourse of rational control over individuals, but a new realm of public community rooted in a discourse of individual autonomy.¹¹

Such an argument raises critical questions, of course, about the meaning of the 'public'. It is the argument here, that for all their concern with 'public' discussion and with the creation of a cultural realm independent of the state, the reformers of Deoband and Aligarh did not create a 'public' realm (in contradistinction to the realm of the 'particular'), for they worked largely *within* the particularistic and

¹⁰ The relation between consumerism and individual autonomy is of course complex and the subject of a large body of literature. The argument here draws on the proposition that the development of consumer society was tied to the consumer's attachment of inner feelings to objects, and to his consequent ability to shape his own identity through the process of buying (consuming) those objects. Muslims, in this sense, 'consumed' symbols made available to them in the press, expressing their inner autonomy in the process. For a review of the literature, see Jean-Christophe Agnew, 'Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective,' presented to a symposium on Popular Culture/Public Culture, North Carolina State University, April 1989.

¹¹ The development of a discourse of individual autonomy was also facilitated by the establishment of a legal structure that made room for the individual disposal of private property and for the enforcement of individual commercial contracts.

scientific political ordering of communities that comprised the colonial state structure. Indeed, with direct cultural control of the state closed to them, they emphasized education and internalized individual rationality as the keys to community self-definition. Though they offered new frames for Muslim cultural leadership within the colonial structure, their fixation on 'reform' offered no vision of community that could challenge the rationalized colonial state structure itself. But the emergence of a 'public' defined by the commercial press suggested the emergence of a new kind of 'public sphere' whose contours were rooted not in rational reform but in the autonomy of affect and emotions. Ironically, it was the insertion of the inner (unreformed and autonomous) heart into the 'public' and political realm that thus allowed the rhetoric of Muslim community to begin to break out of the encapsulated particularism that defined community identity within the 'scientific' structure of the colonial political system.¹² In the Punjab, the emergence of this discourse of inner emotion and community was rooted both in the Urdu press's growth in the early 20th century and in the increasingly important political role played by journalists and poets such as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Muhammad Iqbal. Indeed, the importance of these men grew not only with the expanding role of the press, but also with their ability to translate long-established literary idioms of inner emotion and desires—particularly associated

¹² Partha Chatterjee's work suggests interesting comparisons with Gandhi here. As in the development of Muslim politics about the same time, Gandhi's 'nationalist' politics stressed a personal, utopian moral commitment (rooted in the heart) as the critical foundation for individual political action. This allowed him to transcend the 'limitless range of imperfections, adjustments, compromises and failures' associated with particularistic politics and with the scientific structure of British rule, in order to assert a nationalist community. [See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 109–10]. Gandhi's appeal can thus be explained in the context of many of the same developments, that are described here. Critically, however, the politics of rational (and moral) self-control on the one hand, and the politics of the inner 'heart' on the other, were hardly configured in Gandhi's thinking as opposing realms, but were integrally related, a structure that appears to have differed critically from the one being described here for Muslim politics. This would also suggest different implications for the relationship between nationalism and individual autonomy.

with Urdu poetry—into the realm of public debate. Zafar Ali Khan and Iqbal were certainly not the first to make political use of Urdu poetry, but the translation of poetry into essentially a public and political form of expression, disseminated not through private or state patronage but through the press, was a central facet of their careers, and it underscored the new conception of community and of the autonomous political individual that the new discourse of ‘print capitalism’ embodied. Urdu poetry represented in the 19th century a powerful reservoir of imagery of many kinds, but prominent among these was the imagery of inner desire and emotion, potentially dangerous to the social fabric. Though a vital part of the human makeup, this had for long uneasily confined the rhetoric of poetry to a private realm, sometimes portrayed as irrational, sometimes as a realm of intuitive, even sufi, knowledge.¹³ Indeed, this was a realm that reformers had sought to bring under increasing rationalist control. But with the transformation of political poetry in the press, one can trace the movement of the inner world directly onto the political stage. The private world of emotion—of unrequited desire and longing—in fact came to be central in constituting the Muslim community in a new way, as a product not of cultivated *sharif* culture (however much poetry had been a part of that structure), or personal adherence to the *shariat*, but as a community composed of autonomous individuals, each defined by individual desires. And with this, the autonomous heart rather than the rational mind became the locus of community identity. As Iqbal put it: ‘When several hearts put on a single hue, that is community.’¹⁴

Given this construction, the key to the public demonstration of community came not through public adherence to proper Islamic norms, but through symbolic action, in which the heart was made public. In the 1920s and 1930s the Punjab witnessed a series of symbolic agitations, focusing on the defence of the Khilafat, the Prophet, or mosques—all symbols of Islamic identity—in which the discourse of personal and emotional identification with Islamic

¹³ The relationship of sufism to the distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ is developed at some length by Faisal Devji, ‘The Movement for Women’s Reform in Muslim India.’

¹⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness*, translated by A.J. Arberry (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 12.

symbols was translated from the press into public action. Such agitations drew on the language of sufi devotion and also on the sensibilities attached to urban public arena performances, including Muharram and the Prophet's birthday, which also stressed (and perhaps increasingly so in the 19th century) a public display of personal devotion and inner emotion focused on Islamic symbols. But what distinguished these agitations from such public arena performances was that they were freed from any overtly ceremonial context, and thus from the structures of local authority and obligation that largely shaped them.¹⁵ Tied to the emotive language of the commercial press (and popular oratory), they drew on a discourse of personal autonomy that distinguished them not only from the reformist discourse of individual self-control, but also from the continuing particularism associated with public arena ritual.

Two Punjabi examples of such symbolic agitations—the defence of the Prophet focusing on the pamphlet, *Rangila Rasul* in the late 1920s and the defence of the Shahidganj Mosque at Lahore in the 1930s—illustrate these trends. The agitation over the *Rangila Rasul* ('The Merry Prophet') was rooted in a history of communal polemics in Punjab that had waxed and waned since the emergence of the Arya Samaj in the late 19th century. *Rangila Rasul* was an Arya Samaj inspired pamphlet, first published at Lahore in 1924, that satirized the sexual practices of the Prophet Muhammad. This pamphlet was prosecuted under British press laws and was initially proscribed, but

¹⁵ As Sandria Freitag's work indicates, public arena performances (such as Ram Lila or Muharram) were, despite their important roles in the definition of local community, by no means totally circumscribed by ceremony and ritual. They often expressed fundamental ideas about the ordering of the community. Because of the unbounded character of the texts on which they were based, they often changed in response to political changes in the relations between the localities and larger communities, or between the localities and the state. In this sense, they functioned in some ways, as an analogue of 'public opinion'. But the personal devotionism that shaped them was, I would argue, fundamentally rooted in religious ritual in a way that differentiated them from the overtly political context of the symbolic agitations that I am describing. For a discussion of public arena performances, see Sandria B. Freitag, 'Enactments of Ram's Story and the Changing Nature of "the Public" in British India,' *South Asia*, vol. 14, no. 1 (June 1991).

after repeated appeals the conviction was overturned on a judgment by Justice Dalip Singh of the Lahore High Court in 1927. Though the British government, placing public order far above any question of free speech, rushed to develop new legislation to control the situation, many leading Muslims writers and orators attempted to turn the case into a symbolic test of 'love' of the Prophet, which came to be portrayed by some as a public touchstone of community. But the differing reactions of Muslim leaders to the situation suggested the critical symbolic importance of the issue among Muslims themselves in defining the public and political meaning of 'Muslim community'.

Virtually all Muslims agreed on the importance of protecting the honour of the Prophet. But the terms in which they called for such protection nevertheless diverged. A Lahore meeting of reformist ulama, for example, asserted that love of the Prophet was of central importance for all Muslims. But they nevertheless made clear their view of the community as one defined in its essence by the *shariat* and by controlled personal behavior. 'The Musalmans consider insult to the Prophet a most serious offence, which under the Muslim Law is punishable by death,' they declared. But for most ulama, this did not involve uncontrolled action. If Muslims acted on the basis of 'feelings' that had been 'involuntarily' excited by the failure of the Government effectively to prosecute the pamphlet, then for that, in spite of the appeal to *shariat*, the ulama could not be held responsible. Indeed, with rational self-control at the center of their discourse of Muslim identity, the ulama could hardly identify themselves wholly with such an emotional appeal, however sympathetic they might be to the aims of the appeal and however resonant for them the symbols involved. If Muslims lost self-control, they declared, then 'the entire responsibility of exciting religious feelings and making law subservient to feelings,' would have to devolve not on the ulama, but 'on the Government.'¹⁶

But for many Muslim publicists and newspapers, the importance of the issue lay precisely in that it dramatized the subservience of law to feelings. Indeed, this was central to their definition of community. For Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari, for example, a poet, an active Khilafatist and later a leader of the Ahrar Party, it was

¹⁶ Account of a meeting of the Jamiat-ul-ulema held on 3 July 1927 at Lahore. H.D. Craik to Government of India, 5 July 1927. National Archives of India, Home Political, file 132/111/1927.

the *public* display of the heart in the active protection of the honour of the Prophet that defined the real existence of a Muslim community during the *Rangila Rasul* crisis. 'If the Hindus abuse the Prophet in a meeting held in a private building, he said, Muslims should not attend it. But if any Hindu in any open meeting or procession uses obscene language about the Prophet he should be killed there and then. Any Muslim who would not be prepared to do this is not a true Muslim.'¹⁷ To control one's emotions in such a circumstance was in Bokhari's eyes almost a crime. His appeal was based not on the letter of the *shariat*, but on *action* in the name of the heart, as the most telling validation of Muslim identity. Nor was Bokhari alone in making such appeals. And the effect was illustrated by the actions of a young Muslim who responded to these appeals in deadly fashion—by assassinating the *Rangila Rasul*'s publisher.¹⁸

This agitation over *Rangila Rasul* had little long-lasting political significance, but in the more broad-based agitation for the protection of the Shahidganj Mosque at Lahore that followed in the mid-1930s, the call for the public display of 'feelings' was again at the heart of public action. The Shahidganj Mosque was a religious site that had long been disputed between Muslims and Sikhs, but was awarded to the Sikhs by a special government tribunal in the early 1930s. Though Muslim groups had made various judicial efforts to regain the site, a sensation was caused in 1935 when the Sikhs in possession of the site demolished the mosque even as negotiations with Muslims were going on. As in the *Rangila Rasul* case, the public display of emotional commitment and sacrifice now played a central role in an agitation for what was portrayed as a 'martyred mosque', a display that took on even more meaning when a dozen Muslims were killed during subsequent demonstrations. Noteworthy now was the popular rhetoric of the press, which not only played on images of martyrdom and

¹⁷ Translation of speech of Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari at the Badshahi Masjid, Lahore, 5 July 1927. Quoted in H.D. Craik to Government of India, 7 July 1927. National Archives of India, Home Political, file 132/111/1927.

¹⁸ An account of the pamphlet and the *Rangila Rasul* case is in G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden, E.J. Brill) pp. 40–47. The murder of the publisher of the pamphlet (in 1929) is also discussed in Prem Raman Uprety, *Religion and Politics in Punjab in the 1920s* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1980) p. 118.

sacrifice, but also employed the powerful imagery of unrequited desire drawn from Urdu poetry. As Maulana Zafar Ali Khan wrote in the *Zamindar*, the youth of Lahore had ‘sacrificed themselves like moths on the lamp of Islam’ to defend the mosque, even as the ulama remained silent.¹⁹ And another Lahore daily, the *Siyasat*, drew on similar language in attacking those Muslims who had contented themselves with working through institutional political channels while Lahore’s youths ‘in a state of excitement tore their collars and received bullets in their chests.’²⁰

This metaphor of public exposure of the heart, thus came to be central to the definition of community itself, a counterpoint to the rationalistic discourse of the ulama and the political machinations of responsible and *sharif* Muslim politicians. Perhaps most important, it suggested a community not only ‘imagined’ in the language of the press, but one symbolically acted out in the disinterested and purely emotional actions of ‘restless’ and ‘excited’ male youths—public actions that embodied, in a sense, the inner world of all Muslims, no matter how outwardly controlled and respectable. Whatever the political and religious organizational structures underlying Muslim community life, it was thus only in public *actions* that the true heart of the community itself—and thus its true unity—could be publicly exposed.

Indeed, the agitations pointed the way toward the popularization in urban Punjabi politics in the 1920s and 1930s of a conception of community that carried critical implications for the entire structure of politics and for newly-developing institutions of electoral ‘democracy’. Increasingly, leading urban politicians and newspaper editors (drawing strength from popular agitations, but sometimes organized also into new quasi-political parties such as the Ahrar Party or the Ittihad-i Millat) sought to inject into the structure of state politics (and particularly into elections) a new conception of Muslim leadership based not on a ‘descriptive’ correspondence between leaders and a state-defined community, but on the same commitment to symbols that was embodied in these agitations. However carefully

¹⁹ *Zamindar* (Lahore), 24 August 1935. Punjab Archives, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IV-A.

²⁰ *Siyasat* (Lahore), 13 August 1935. Punjab Archives, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. III-A.

the British had sought to define through separate electorates a fixed and controlled space for the Muslim community within the state structure, these urban leaders now sought to transform urban elections into a realm for the creation of a new kind of ‘public’, defined at the intersection of an emerging commercial press, with its appeals to symbols as a focus for Muslim community identity, and an appeal to popular action (including voting) as an expression simultaneously of community and individual autonomy.²¹ This was only possible in a realm, such as the cities, where the Urdu press and printing were relatively influential. But critically, and in spite of the central importance in this of an Urdu literary tradition, it was a public created not in a cultural realm separated from politics, but one created within the structure of politics itself, and yet, created in self-conscious opposition to the particularism of the ‘scientific’ colonial structure.

The importance of this for the subsequent evolution of Muslim politics—and particularly for ‘Muslim nationalism’—should not be underestimated, for it pointed toward the emergence of a ‘public’, in Habermas’s sense, that was not encapsulated by the state, but could claim ultimately to exert surveillance over it. But in immediate terms, this had relatively little impact, not only because the urban political realm remained a relatively small and circumscribed one within the structure of British rule, but also because, as the immediate results of both urban agitations and elections suggested, such a construction of community was not readily translated into distinctive forms of lasting political organization in British India. Neither in the *Rangila Rasul* case nor in the Shahidganj agitation were symbolic actions followed by political organization expressing effectively the interests of the Muslim community in its relations with the government—indeed, one might argue that the very nature of the construction of community embodied in these agitations largely precluded such an outcome. The efforts by leading editors such as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and by popular orators such as Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari to form political groups to contest urban elections also did not—in spite of some electoral success—produce any lasting, ‘rational’ structures of effective political organization. Indeed, the denouement of such contests usually was bitter infighting, and often a politics of

²¹ To develop these ideas, a detailed study of the rhetoric of urban elections is necessary. For some preliminary attempts in this direction, see Chapter 7.

conflicting personal interest that seemed to deny the very foundation of unity on which symbolic community was constructed.

But the critical long-term implications of these developments became evident with the emergence of the demand for Pakistan, for it was only with the emergence of Pakistan that the emotional construction of community in these agitations began to take on a new form. At the heart of this lay the relationship of the construction of community to a discourse of nationalism. In fact, one might argue that the emergence of the Pakistan demand as the centerpiece of Muslim community discourse grew out of this history of popular urban action and agitation—this creation of a new ‘public’—in two ways. On the one hand, the agitational politics of the cities proved critical to the emergence of the idea of a ‘nation’—because it helped to define a new transcendent form of community. This new form of community ‘imagined’ both in the world and in the individual heart, was, like the idea of a nation, distinctive precisely because it transcended the world of rationality and scientific classification (even if it gained political meaning in interaction with that world). It transcended the arenas of interests and controls (both internal and external) that shaped all the class, kin-based, and sectarian divisions among Muslims that were products of a fixed and visible outer reality. In the discourse of nationalism, all these divisions dissolved in the face of a larger (or transcendent) communal identity rooted in a place that the rational world could not penetrate—in the heart and emotions of the autonomous individual. Whatever its origins in urban politics, this conception thus exerted a powerful force on the emerging concept of a ‘national’ identity.²²

But this was only one side of the coin. The origins of the Pakistan movement can be seen, at the same time, as part of an effort by the political leaders among Indian Muslims to control this nationalist

²² It is important to note here that this argument focuses on the structural meaning of nationalism as an ideology, and not on the specific form that the concept of the nation took. In the debate between Iqbal and Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani on the meaning of *qaum* and *millat*, for example, it was Iqbal who championed the more clearly nationalist ideology (in the sense it is used here), even though he rejected Madani’s conception of a nation rooted in India, and sought to define a more explicitly Islamic nationalism, transcending any fixed geographical identification.

discourse by channelling it toward a new, rational structure capable of containing it, the nation-state. The movement for Pakistan was led by a wide range of Muslims rooted in the rationalistic and reformist discourse of the late 19th and 20th centuries, and the rhetoric of emotional nationalism therefore merged with the rhetoric of control and discipline. Not all the inheritors of Aligarh and Deoband of course supported Pakistan; in the eyes of many of them, particularly those associated with Deoband, its meaning was highly ambiguous.

But the centrality of rationality and self-control in the movement was embodied by Jinnah himself; its meaning for the new state was captured clearly in Jinnah's theory of 'two nations'. Hinduism and Islam were not two different religions, Jinnah declared, but two 'distinct social orders,' which produced different 'religious philosophies, social customs and literature.' They were two distinct civilizations, with different histories, epics, heroes, etc.²³ They were therefore two objectively knowable communities, defined by outward, rationally perceived characteristics and histories. The importance of individual self-discipline for the realization of this Muslim 'nation' was suggested by Jinnah's motto for the new Pakistan—'unity, faith, discipline.' By tying the discourse of nationalism to a new vision of the state, many of the Pakistan movement's leaders thus sought to ground it in a structure rooted in discipline and authority. And given this, the relationship of the state to an emerging democratic public sphere was, from the beginning, a highly ambivalent one.

The ambiguities in the definition of a national 'public', public and in its relation to the state, have continued to shape politics since Pakistan's creation. The history of electoral democracy, with its cyclic moves from military dictatorships to parliamentary government has suggested this, as have the repeated efforts of Pakistani states to devise new means of institutional control and manipulation over a still problematic Pakistani 'public' sphere. General Ayub's 'basic democracies', and General Zia's 'partyless' elections both were means by which the state sought to maintain a legitimizing structure of representative 'democracy' even as the electoral arena was, through attempts to control and fix 'representative' leadership, largely sealed

²³ Presidential Address of M.A. Jinnah to the 27th session of the All-India Muslim League, Lahore, 22–24 March 1940. S.S. Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan*, vol. 2 (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), p. 338.

off from effective ‘public’ debate and action. Nevertheless, the history of the inner realm of active identification with symbols has continued to play an important role in the definition of nationalism and national identity.

As in most nation-states, the emotional rhetoric of national identity was in part displaced at Pakistan’s creation from symbols of Islamic community to symbols of the state—the flag, the anthem, the army, etc. But although the history of nationalism in Pakistan is a complex one, with many cross-cutting political, religious and linguistic elements, the tension between the assertion of emotional loyalty to Islamic symbols as an expression of both popular community and individual autonomy, and the assertion of loyalty to the symbols of the state has at times found expression in Pakistan in open political conflict. One prominent expression of this has arisen, for example, in the *Tahrik-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat* (The Movement for the Finality of the Prophethood), a movement that in its strongly anti-Ahmadiyya rhetoric had its roots in the popular agitations and pamphlets of the 1930s. It stressed the public expression of love of the Prophet as the touchstone of Muslim identity. Drawing as well on the support of many ulama, this movement repeatedly has brought a public Islamic movement into direct conflict with the Pakistani government, drawing heavily on an appeal to personal love of the Prophet. That this represented a potential threat to the rationality of Pakistan’s state administration has been demonstrated by the state’s sharp reactions, its declaration of martial law in the Punjab in the 1950s, its imprisonment of key leaders of the movement and adoption of press controls, and ultimately its officially declaring the Ahmadiyya a non-Muslim minority in order to co-opt and control the movement. One can perhaps see similar outpourings in the more recent public agitations centered on the banning of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*.

But the limitations of these movements—and the different context created by the existence of the Pakistan state—suggest the degree to which the fusing of nationalism with the identity of the state has in fact succeeded in largely co-opting this discourse within a structure of rationalized, bureaucratized administration and state control. The meaning of such symbolic agitations has thus been different in independent Pakistan from what it was in colonial India. But the history of this discourse of the individual heart provides important clues for understanding the meaning of Muslim nationalism in

Pakistan. Further, it suggests the ways that an examination of popular, symbolic action and agitation—and its critical intersection with the discourse of commercial press and publications on the one hands and with the devotionism of public arena performances on the other—helps us to decipher the meanings of emerging new forms of Muslim community and the Muslim ‘public’ that emerged in India under colonial rule.

The Shahidganj Mosque Incident: A Prelude to Pakistan

Muslimans never hesitate to make any sacrifice in the path of
preserving the emblems of religion and God.

—Maulana Zafar Ali Khan¹

The power of Islamic symbols to mobilize Indian Muslims in the 20th century was strikingly demonstrated by the outbreak of an agitation in 1935 to defend an obscure mosque located outside the walls of the old city of Lahore.¹ In the face of the mosque's threatened destruction, Muslims of Lahore rallied, through the press and the courts, through public demonstrations, and ultimately through threatened civil disobedience, to protect the mosque from its enemies. But although the mosque—appropriately named Shahidganj, 'treasure of martyrs'— became a symbol of the unity and commitment of an 'Islamic community' in Lahore and in the Punjab, the course of the agitation demonstrated the dilemmas faced by Muslims who attempted to define the political existence of an Islamic community within the context of colonial rule.

The search for a political definition of Islamic community in British India has been the subject of a good deal of recent scholarly attention. Scholars such as David Lelyveld in his history of Aligarh College,² Barbara Metcalf in her study of the *madrasa* at

¹ *Zamindar* (Lahore), 2 July 1935, Punjab Civil Secretariat Archives, Lahore (henceforth P.C.S.A.), Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IA.

² David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

Deoband,³ and Gail Minault in her account of the Indian Khilafat movement,⁴ have stressed the roles of education and of symbols in defining the continuing presence of an Islamic community in colonial India. Others have attempted to analyze the structure of politics among Muslims within the British colonial situation. But the difficulties in analyzing the relationship between politics and religion in British India remain considerable.

These difficulties are evident in a scholarly exchange between Paul Brass and Francis Robinson. In analyzing the political role of Islamic symbols in British India, Brass has argued that one must first understand the structural position of the Muslim elites who made use of them. In Brass's view, different Islamic symbols were used by different Muslim elites—by landlords, government servants, ulama, and politicians—in order to enhance their own fortunes in Indian politics. Brass does not deny that these elites were 'limited' and 'constrained' by the cultures of the groups they represented, but he argues that it was the process of 'symbol selection and symbol manipulation' that defined for these leaders the political shape of the community.⁵ Francis Robinson has in turn argued that such a view fails to take account of the emotive power of the Islamic tradition itself—a tradition which by the 19th and 20th centuries had deeply influenced Muslim masses and elites alike. The charisma of the 'ideal religio-political community,' Robinson argues, defined in the classical Muslim tradition, exercised a powerful influence not only in guiding the political positions taken by nearly all Muslim elites, but also in shaping the development of Muslim separatist politics in the 20th century.⁶

Neither of these views can be ignored in analyzing a movement such as the agitation in defence of the Shahidganj mosque. One must begin an account of the Shahidganj agitation by acknowledging the

³ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁴ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

⁵ Paul Brass, 'Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia,' in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp, eds, *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 1979), pp. 35–77.

⁶ Francis Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Separatism,' in *Ibid.*, pp. 78–112.

pervasive power of the classical tradition of Islamic community among Lahore's Muslims, for the role of the Shahidganj mosque as a political symbol is inexplicable except in this context. But to acknowledge this is only to begin to understand the agitation. As Brass argues, different groups not only had different definitions of the political meaning of Islamic community but, at times, different definitions of *politics* and of *Islam* as well. An understanding of the political context in which the agitation occurred is thus critical for an understanding of the mosque's symbolic significance.

In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate how certain leaders of Lahore focused their attention on the defence of a mosque in the 1930s in an attempt to reconcile their ideas about the symbolic meaning of Islamic community with the political realities they were facing. It was this that gave the Shahidganj agitation significance. But the ultimate failure of the Shahidganj mosque agitation also dramatized the severe problems facing Punjabi Muslims in the search for an effective symbolic and political definition of Islamic community in colonial India. The failure of the agitation pointed the way for many Punjabi Muslims toward ultimate support of another, more powerful political symbol of Islamic community—the concept of an independent Islamic state.

Lahore and the Shahidganj Mosque

The Shahidganj mosque itself was the product of an era when Muslims ruled in Lahore. The mosque had been constructed in the 18th century when Lahore was the provincial capital of the Punjab under the Mughals and was a center of Muslim culture and administration. As a result of bitter conflict among Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs during the 18th century, however, Lahore had suffered repeated occupations and eventually fallen into Sikh hands. As a result of these conflicts, the Shahidganj site came to have important symbolic associations. For the Sikhs, the site had gained notoriety in the mid-18th century as the scene of brutal executions conducted by the Mughal governor, and it was thus for them associated with martyrs for their faith—hence the name Shahidganj. When a Sikh army occupied the city in 1762, the mosque was seized and closed off

permanently to Muslim prayer, a situation which remained unchanged in the 19th century even after the arrival of the British.⁷

For many Muslims, the period after the collapse of Mughal authority had been a difficult one. Under Sikh rule, despite Maharaja Ranjit Singh's continued holding of court in the city, Lahore had in many respects been surpassed in importance by the nearby city of Amritsar, which was the religious capital of the Sikhs and the most important commercial centre of the Punjab. The first census after the British occupation of the Punjab showed that Lahore's population had dropped to fewer than 100,000 persons, three-quarters the population of Amritsar. Many of its leading Muslim families had fallen on very hard times. But with the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849 and the re-establishment of Lahore as provincial capital within a new empire, the fortunes of the city began to revive. As a center of administration, culture, and education, Lahore grew rapidly under the British, attaining by 1931 a population of 430,000, almost double that of Amritsar. In part this reflected the increasing importance of the city as an agricultural market and rail centre, but much of this growth came in the new sections of Lahore outside the city walls, which were dominated by the educated elites associated with the new colonial administration.⁸

For Lahore's Muslims, the growth of these elites had proved a mixed blessing. Though Muslims made up about 58 percent of the population of the city in 1931—a percentage comparable to their proportion in the population of Punjab as a whole—they comprised only a relatively small part of the educated elite associated culturally with the new imperial power. They were also sparsely represented among the new, largely Hindu, financial and professional elites who

⁷ The history of the Shahidganj mosque was a matter of some dispute. The basic facts here are taken from the court judgement in the case of Masjid Shahid Ganj and others vs. Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar (First Appeal no. 244 of 1936), *All India Reporter* (Lahore) (1938), p. 372, and from Ganda Singh, *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj, Lahore* (1935), pp. 1–42. Ganda Singh argued that there was no evidence that the Shahidganj building, though shaped like a mosque, had ever been used for Muslim prayer.

⁸ The census figures here are taken from *Census of India*, 1931, vol. 17 (Punjab), pt. I-Report, pp. 93–95.

had taken advantage of the opportunities offered by colonial rule. With little modern industrial development in the city aside from the big Northwestern Railway workshops at Mughalpura, the Muslims of Lahore were concentrated in traditional manual and commercial occupations, their numbers swollen to a degree by agriculturalists from the surrounding, predominantly Muslim countryside.⁹

The structure of Muslim leadership in these circumstances was shaped strongly by the system of administration that the British had established in the Punjab as a whole. In the rural areas, where the political foundations of colonial power lay, the British had developed in the second half of the 19th century an administration that was tied to the power of landed, often tribally based intermediaries, who had thrown their support to the British early on in return for important places in the colonial administration. With relatively weak representation among the educated elite in the city, political leadership among Muslims in Lahore also tended to be dominated by landed 'notables'. Families such as the Qazilbash Nawabs, an old Shi'i family with substantial property in Lahore Tehsil and in the United Provinces, were favored recipients of British patronage in the 19th century.¹⁰ Politically more important in the 19th century were many of the landed families of Lahore's suburbs—Baghbanpura, Mughalpura, Mianmir, Mozang—who, in the 19th century under British patronage, had 'consolidated their social and political position even as their land gradually became more urbanized,'¹¹ and who had thus emerged in the 19th century with growing political influence. Using the ties of *biradari* and faction to cement links with Muslim *muhalla* leaders in other parts of the city, some of these men emerged among the city's

⁹ There is no readily available history of Lahore during the British period. See, however, Ravinder Kumar, 'The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Lahore,' in R. Kumar, *Essays on Gandhian Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 236–97, for general background on the social composition of the city.

¹⁰ R. Kumar, 'Rowlatt Satyagraha,' pp. 260–61. For the family history of the Qazilbash Nawabs, see L. Griffin and C.F. Massey, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1910), vol. I, pp. 253–59.

¹¹ Shahid Javed Burki, 'Migration, Urbanization and Politics in Pakistan,' in W. Howard W'riggins and James F. Guyot, eds, *Population, Politics and the Future of Southern Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 155.

most powerful bosses (*rais*). Some also played important roles in commerce and began, in the 19th century, to enter the new professions.¹²

Their role in the structure of religious organization in colonial Lahore enhanced the influence of these urban *rais*. Some were prominent in the administration of the endowments (*auqaf*) supporting the mosques and shrines of the city; an example was the role of Mirza Sir Zafar Ali, scion of a prominent Mughal family, as *mutawalli* of the important Wazir Khan mosque in the old city. With the establishment of colonial control, the British had attempted to bolster this pattern of influence by encouraging the formation of a committee of Muslim notables to administer the city's most important mosque, the Badshahi mosque of the Emperor Aurangzeb, which had fallen into the hands of the British after the annexation of the city. Formed in 1869 under the leadership of a former British tahsildar, Khan Barkat Ali Khan, the Anjuman Islamia eventually assumed control of several other important mosques in Lahore as well.¹³ Though professing a commitment to the promotion of Muslim culture and to the administration of these mosques in the name of the 'community', the Anjuman Islamia in fact reflected the emerging structure of British authority among the Muslim *rais* of the city. It sought both to encourage loyalty to the administration and to carry the views of the 'Muslim community' to the government.¹⁴

This structure of authority provided the backdrop for the emergence of conflict in the 19th century over control of the Shahidganj mosque, which remained in the hands of the Sikhs. Though a Muslim claiming hereditary rights as a descendant of the *mutawallis* of the mosque had filed a personal appeal for the return

¹² The outstanding example of such a family is the Mian family of Baghbanpura. See Mian Bashir Ahmad, *Justice Shah Din: His Life and Writings* (Lahore: Mian Bashir Ahmad, 1962) and Jahanara Shah Nawaz, *Father and Daughter* (Lahore: Nigarishat, 1971).

¹³ The founding of the Anjuman Islamia is discussed in S.M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), p. 195.

¹⁴ The purposes and goals of the Anjuman included explicitly the fostering of loyalty to the government: *Anjuman Islamiya-yi Panjab Lahaur ka sirmahirala*, 1926.

of the mosque in the 1850s,¹⁵ the first serious claim for control of the Shahidganj mosque on behalf of the 'Muslim community' was lodged by the Anjuman Islamia in the 1920s. Ironically, this claim was lodged in a context that called into question not only the right of the Sikhs to control the site but also the political foundations of the authority of the Anjuman Islamia itself. The appeal of the Anjuman was precipitated by passage in the Punjab legislature in the 1920s of an Act that threatened to revolutionize the administration of religious places in the Punjab. After a long and bitter struggle among the Sikhs, the passage of the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Act of 1925 had officially removed Sikh *gurdwaras* (temples) from the control of hereditary pro-British custodians and placed them under the control of popularly elected Sikh committees—an effort which had at first been strongly resisted by the British. This Act had grown out of the concerns of Sikh leaders to develop an institutionalized popular Sikh identity in British Punjab that was independent of the structure of power under the colonial regime.¹⁶ Though the Act applied only to the Sikhs, it had important implications for the organization of religious authority within all the Punjab's religious communities. In fact, although it provided the Anjuman Islamia with an opening to press for the return of the Shahidganj mosque, it had also raised important questions about the character of community leadership, not only among the Sikhs but among Muslims as well.

For the Anjuman Islamia, the most critical feature of the Act in the short run was its establishment of a Gurdwaras Tribunal which was now given the power to rule on the validity of Sikh property claims. In the case of the Shahidganj mosque, the Anjuman entered an appeal arguing that in spite of long Sikh occupation and sacred association with the site, the Shahidganj mosque was still a mosque and was thus not the property of the Sikhs at all but of the 'Muslim community'. But the plea of the Anjuman highlighted a question that would be central throughout the Shahidganj affair: who could now speak in the name of the 'Muslim community'? Though the Anjuman Islamia itself was the most prominent organization in Lahore in the administration

¹⁵ Singh, pp. 41–57.

¹⁶ An account of the *gurdwara* reform movement, which produced the Sikh *gurdwara* legislation of the 1920s, is Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978).

of mosques, it had changed little in its basic structure or orientation since its founding, remaining closely tied to the influence of urban notables and to the British administration. The conflict with the newly created Sikh Central Gurdwaras Committee (SGPC)¹⁷ had provided clear evidence of the degree to which the basic foundations for the political expression of community solidarity were changing in 20th century Punjab. For most Muslims in Lahore, the Anjuman Islamia, with a non-elected membership of little over 300, seemed a poor excuse in 1930 for a Muslim counterpart to the SGPC.¹⁸

The Political Definition of Muslim Community

The various answers to the question of a voice for the Muslim community reflected the emergence of sharply divergent ideas in the 20th century as to what defined a Muslim community's political existence in the Punjab. The strongest claim to Muslim political leadership in the first decades of the 20th century had come from a newly emergent class of Muslim men who had sought, with a command over the English constitutional idiom, to speak in the name of the Muslim community in the new institutions of representative government created by the British. These men—lawyers like Sir Fazl-i-Husayn and Sir Muhammad Shafi—exercised a stronger influence than that of the local *muhallapatrons*. Their political conceptions of the Muslim community were in fact forged largely out of competition with Hindu and Sikh professional men for places in the services and in the courts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The political character of the Muslim community had been defined for them largely by the requirements of the competition for places within the institutions of authority established by the British, and they had thus stressed the importance of public education as a preparation for it. Not only was education a prerequisite to these men for effective participation in the public services, but even more important, from their

¹⁷ The initials stand for Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

¹⁸ See judgement of District Judge, S.L. Sale, 25 May 1936; Lahore High Court, First Appeal no. 244 of 1936; Masjid Shahid Ganj and others vs. Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar. Sale reviewed the arguments against the representative character of the Anjuman Islamia which were produced in court.

perspective, it helped to instil in Muslim youth a distinctive cultural identity, an awareness of the Muslim community as a distinctive entity in competition with those outside it. In contrast with the Anjuman Islamia, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries they had thus tended to support the more socially and educationally activist Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam, which had established a network of Islamic schools

in Lahore emphasizing a combination of English education and Islamic culture.¹⁹ For them, leadership of the Muslim community required an aggressive expression of both Muslim interests and Muslim culture.

Unlike the Sikhs who had established the SGPC, however, these leaders in no way sought to challenge the power of the local patrons who provided the backbone of the British administration. Their ideas of Muslim community were not shaped by any desire to change the basic structure of political authority among the Muslims; they had instead sought to define a community identity that would allow Muslims to compete more effectively within the British system. This strategy was perhaps most dramatically epitomized by the career of Sir Fazl-i-Husayn, who in the early 1920s rallied the primarily rural Muslims who dominated the provincial legislature in support of a program that guaranteed Muslims larger shares of power in the Punjab's municipal committees and greater access to the province's educational institutions, while providing, at the same time, a defence of the existing power structure in the countryside.²⁰ For men like Sir Fazl-i-Husayn, the leadership of the community, whether in competition for places in the services or in defending a mosque, was defined by the requirements of effective political action within the British political system.

Such a view contrasted sharply with views about the meaning of community within another important group in Lahore, the ulama. Unlike the professional class among the Muslims, the ulama of Lahore tended in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to be neither well organized nor politically active, their activities revolving around the city's numerous mosques and *madrasas*. But they were by no means

¹⁹ Ikram, *Modern Muslim India*, pp. 198–200.

²⁰ Mian Fazl-i-Husayn's career and his organization of the Unionist Party in the Punjab Council are detailed in the biography by his son, Azim Husain, *Fazl-i-Husain* (Bombay: Longmans Green, 1946).

immune to the currents of religious reform that in the late 19th century influenced the ulama of the subcontinent generally—currents that had pushed them toward a view of community defined not by political competition but by popular adherence to personal Islamic religious norms. The establishment in particular of the *dar al-ulum* (college) at Deoband in the United Provinces had produced a stress on popular religious education among the ulama, which had led to the crystallization of an ideal of Muslim community in which the instruction of the individual Muslim in the *shariat* was primary. Such an ideal had become increasingly important in the Punjab in the early 19th century not only to those influenced directly by Deoband, but to the Deobandis' theological opponents among the more radically scripturalist Ahl-i Hadith and among the more custom-oriented Bareilvi ulama as well. The result was an increasingly widespread conception of the meaning of Islamic community among the ulama which diverged sharply from the conceptions of men like Sir Fazl-i-Husayn, for it was an ideal defined, in its essence, independent of the structure of political authority and based on the spread of correct Islamic practice.²¹

The political implications of the ulama's view of community in 19th-century British India were, however, ambiguous. With their focus primarily on religious education, the ulama of Deoband had been largely apolitical in the late 19th century, turning to politics only during and after World War I, when they sought to mobilize support for the Turkish Khilafat. This had led to the foundation at Amritsar in 1919 of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, an association that had sought to express the increasingly pro-Khilafat and anti-British views of the ulama in Indian politics.²² But defining the political position of the Muslim community in the context of British India proved no easy task for these ulama. In the 1920s, in rallying support for the Khilafat in opposition to the British government and in seeking the cooperation of the largely Hindu Indian National Congress in the task, the Jamiati

²¹ The history of the Deobandi ulama in the 19th century and the development of their ideas are detailed in Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

²² Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 189.

Ulama-yi Hind had begun to define the Muslim community as a selfregulating *millat* within the larger Indian polity, a community defined internally both by the diffusion of religious education and by the religious leadership provided by the ulama. It had even looked forward to an independent India in which the community would, in spite of the existence of a predominantly non-Muslim government, regulate its own internal affairs according to the *shariat*.²³ Still, the immediate political implications of such a view remained largely ill-defined. Like the Sikhs who had established the SGPC, the ulama of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind had sought to establish a structure for community identity independent of the structure of political patronage and control under the British administration. But unlike the SGPC, theirs was a structure rooted in the spread of personal standards of Islamic behavior, and it thus offered little as an organizational alternative for the community's political expression.

Such views, however, were by no means held by all of Lahore's ulama. The most important supporter of the political views of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind in Lahore was probably Maulana Ahmad Ali, the leading Deobandi *alim* in the city, who had gained a wide reputation in Lahore in the 1920s by teaching daily public Quran classes and who, by the mid-1920s, had organized his following into an influential *anjuman*, the Anjuman Khuddam al-Din.²⁴ But not all the ulama followed his example. Many of the reformist ulama, in spite of sympathy for the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, sought to provide themselves with a more direct vehicle for political activity in the Majlis-i Ahrar, a radically anti-British party formed in 1929 in cooperation with other urban political leaders.²⁵ Others, particularly among the Bareilvi ulama, rejected the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind altogether and organized their own independent *anjuman* under the

²³ For the political ideas of the ulama in the 20th century, see Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom—and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India* (Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971).

²⁴ Abdul Hamid Khan, *Mard-i Momin* (Lahore: Ferozesons, 1962), pp. 59–71.

²⁵ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1969), pp. 270–75.

leadership of the *khatib* (preacher) of the Wazir Khan mosque, the Anjuman Hizb al-Ahnaf.²⁶ Like the Deobandis, this *anjuman* focused its attention primarily on religious education and thus stressed individual adherence to the *shariat* as a foundation of Muslim community. But its political position seems to have been far more sympathetic to the British administration; indeed, many of these ulama continued to be influenced by their close connections with traditional *muhalla* patrons in the urban localities and with Sufi *pirs* in the countryside.

In fact, popular ideas about the political shape of the Muslim community in Lahore were probably most deeply influenced in the 20th century by neither the politicians nor the ulama, but by another newly emergent class of leaders associated with the rapidly expanding Muslim press. The press itself had become an important political force in Lahore only in the late 19th century after the launching of the *Paisa Akhbar* (Penny Paper) in the 1880s, the first mass-circulation Urdu daily in the city.²⁷ But the importance of the press in the definition of Muslim community identity derived not just from the increasing political influence wielded in the city by the leading newspaper editors in the 20th century, but from the particular character of the ideal of community they expounded, an ideal that transcended in some respects the contradiction between the politicians' and the ulama's conceptions of community. Unlike Sir Fazl-i-Husayn, whose political view of Muslim community was grounded in the imperial political culture of the British, or the ulama of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, whose view was grounded in the spread of adherence to the *shariat*, the conception of community popularized in the 19th-century press tended not to be grounded in any particular form of organization or code of conduct, but, rather, in the special inheritance—symbolized by the Prophet, the Quran, and the mosque—that every Muslim could claim as his birthright.

To understand this view of the community and its popular influence in Lahore, one can do no better than to turn to the writings of

²⁶ Iqbal Ahmad Faruqi, *Tazkirah-yi Ulama-yi Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat, Lahaur* (Lahore: Maktabah Nabviya, 1975) pp. 320–21.

²⁷ S.M.A. Feroze, *Press in Pakistan* (Lahore: National Publications, 1957), pp. 69–72. 'Mass circulation' is of course used in a relative sense, for its circulation was still quite small by present-day standards.

the poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal who, though not himself a journalist, crystallized many of the ideas that found less literary expression in the popular press. The key to Iqbal's thought in this regard was his stress on *tawhid* (the unity of God) as the basic foundation for Muslim identity and community. 'Islam,' he wrote, 'as a polity is only a practical means of making this principle (*tawhid*) a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind.'²⁸ In emphasizing *tawhid* as a foundation for Islamic faith, Iqbal was only stating a position that most ulama and pious Muslims would have fully accepted. The key to Iqbal's ideas on the character of Muslim community was his emphasis on *tawhid* not as the direct foundation for a particular form of organization, but as an ideal which pointed the Muslim individual toward a realization of his own 'ideal nature'—the 'ideal nature' which bound him to God's larger community.²⁹ The definition of the community, in Iqbal's view, was thus not tied to the overlordship of monarch or priest, of politician or *alim*, but to the awareness by individual Muslims of their own special heritage and identity³⁰—an identity symbolized by nothing more complicated than the confession of faith:

There is no god but God: this is the soul
And body of our pure Community,
The pitch that keeps our instrument in tune,
The very substance of our mysteries,
The knotted thread that binds our scattered thoughts.³¹

For Iqbal it was more than anything else the common realization by Muslims of the meaning of the confession of faith, and thus of their own 'Muslimness', that brought the community into being:

²⁸ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1971), p. 147.

²⁹ Ibid.: '[Islam] demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature.'

³⁰ Riffat Burki, 'Iqbal and Tauhid,' *Iqbal Review*, 14, no. 3 (1973), p. 12.

³¹ Sir Muhammad Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness (Rumuz-i Bekhudi)*, translated by A.J. Arberry (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 12.

When several hearts put on a single hue
That is Community.³²

Such a view of community was an extremely simple one, and yet it was one with political implications far different from those of the views of community held by the Anjuman Islamia, by men like Sir Fazl-i Husayn, or even by the leaders of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind. In Iqbal's view, community was defined not only independently of the structure of authority under the colonial administration but also independently of the primary stress on outward standards of Islamic conduct maintained by many of the ulama. No doubt both of these, and particularly the *Shariat*, were critically important to Iqbal, but the community itself was defined in its essence only by the awareness of individual Muslims of their own Islamic identity—an identity which, even without the guidance of the ulama, gave them a special place in history as the inheritors of the Prophet's revelation. The charismatic character of the community in this context was perhaps nowhere more clearly exemplified than in the first line of Iqbal's dedication of *The Mysteries of Selflessness* to the Muslim community, that community which had inherited the revelation of the Seal of the Prophets:

You, who were made by God to be the Seal
Of all the peoples dwelling on the earth.³³

It was in large part such a view of Muslim community that was translated into popular terms and carried into the public arena in the 19th century by the leading editors of Lahore's Urdu press—men like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, editor of the daily *Zamindar*. Zafar Ali Khan, the son of a post office inspector and a graduate of Aligarh, rose rapidly to prominence in the years after 1911, when he moved his father's newspaper, the *Zamindar*, to Lahore and established it as a daily.³⁴ In the years before World War I, Zafar Ali Khan gained a

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 1. This concept is developed in W. Montgomery Watt, 'The Conception of the Charismatic Community in Islam,' *Numen* 7, no. 1 (1960).

³⁴ Kumar, 'Rowlatt Satyagraha,' pp. 269–71; Data on Zafar Ali Khan and *Zamindar*, corrected up to 1940, PCSA, Press Branch, file 1918, vol. XIVA. See also Ghulam Husain Zulfiqar, *Zafar 'Ali Khan: Adib o Sha'ir* (Lahore: Maktabah Khayaban-i Adab, 1967).

reputation as one of the leading public spokesmen for the Muslim community, largely as a result of his championing of pan-Islam, and his defence, in language both passionate and sentimental, of the Muslims of the Ottoman empire against the onslaught of the 'devouring wolves of the cross.'³⁵ Subsequently, he supported a wide variety of Islamic causes, including the defence of the Kanpur mosque in 1913,³⁶ the Khilafat movement in 1920,³⁷ and the defence of the honour of the Prophet in the 1927 *Rangila Rasul* agitation³⁸—many of which brought him into sharp conflict with the British and led to the repeated forfeiture of the security of the *Zamindar* under British press laws.³⁹

³⁵ Data on Zafar Ali Khan and *Zamindar*, corrected up to 1940, PCSA, Press Branch, file 1918, vol. XIVA.

³⁶ The removal of a portion of a small mosque in Kanpur in 1913 led to local riots and an all-India agitation to protect the mosque. For an account of the episode, see Sandria B. Freitag, 'The Roots of Muslim Separatism in South Asia: Personal Practice and Public Structures in Kanpur and Bombay,' in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus, eds, *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 115–45. For an example of Zafar Ali Khan's rhetoric on this, issue, see Kumar, 'Rowlatt Satyagraha,' p. 271.

³⁷ For a history of the Indian Khilafat movement, see Minault, *Khilafat Movement*. Zafar Ali Khan was for a time secretary of the Punjab Khilafat Committee and in October 1921 was prosecuted and imprisoned for seditious speeches. In 1920 the *Zamindar* also forfeited its security to the government. PCSA, Press Branch, file 1918, vol. XIVA.

³⁸ *Rangila Rasul* was a Hindu-authored pamphlet ridiculing the Prophet which was published in Lahore in 1924. The publisher was prosecuted, but after long court proceedings, he was acquitted in 1927. For a discussion of the case see G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 40–47. The publisher's acquittal led to a Muslim agitation and his assassination. Zafar Ali Khan was also arrested once again during the course of the agitation: Letter, H. D. Craik (Chief Secretary, Punjab) to Government of India, 5 July 1927, National Archives of India, Home Political file 132/III/1927.

³⁹ For an account of the history of British press laws in India, see Gerald Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907–1947* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974). The security forfeitures of the *Zamindar* are discussed in a letter from H.D. Craik (Chief Secretary, Punjab) to Secretary of Home Dept, Government of India, 6

In spite of his clashes with the British, Zafar Ali Khan's prime concern throughout his career was the public focus of Muslim politics on Islamic symbols. For Zafar Ali Khan it was, in fact, this focus on symbols that was central to the public dramatization of the conception of community which men like Iqbal had offered. Like Iqbal, Zafar Ali Khan was a poet, and through the press he transformed Urdu poetry—a symbol of Muslim greatness and elite dominance in India—into an idiom of everyday political expression. Though he was by no means blind to the immediate political realities facing the Muslims within British India or, for that matter, to the *shariat*-based concerns of the ulama, he stressed public action in the name of Islamic symbols as a means of dramatizing the community's power and charisma. The Khilafat, the Prophet, a mosque—these were the causes that Zafar Ali Khan defended most passionately, and his popular influence in championing such causes was indicated by the *Zamindar*'s attainment by 1915 of a circulation of over 15,000, unprecedented for an Urdu newspaper at that time.⁴⁰

For many of those who sought a 20th-century voice for the community in Lahore, newspapers like the *Zamindar* proved irresistible. The idiom of the *Zamindar* in fact came to dominate much of the popular discourse in Lahore on the subject of community in the 1920s and 1930s—a discourse in which not only the Muslim press but also public orators, poets, pamphleteers, and even many of the ulama took a prominent part. But although this discourse carried with it a strong call to individual action, it was a call to action which, perhaps as much as the call of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, was politically unorganized and rarely focused on concrete political goals. Perhaps no one captured the highly emotional, essentially individualistic character of this appeal better than the fiery Muslim orator Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari, the outstanding public orator of his generation.⁴¹ Even if

August 1927, PCSA, Press Branch, file 5950. Zafar Ali Khan was able to avoid prosecution in connection with most of these articles by employing 'dummy' editors.

⁴⁰ Feroze, *Press in Pakistan*, pp. 74–81.

⁴¹ Shorish Kashmiri, *Sayyid 'Ataullah Shah Bukhari (Sawanih o Afkar)* (Lahore: Chatan Press, 1973); Janbaz Mirza, *Hayat-i Amir-i Shari'at* (Lahore: Maktabah Tabsirah, 1969). For most of his later career, Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari was a leader of the Ahrar Party.

a person offers prayers all night and fasts during the day and even if he recites the Namaz at midnight,' Bokhari declared in 1935,

his piety and prayers are useless if he does not cherish in his heart the desire of launching a crusade to vindicate the honour of the Prophet.... A man may be a sinner, a liar, a thief and a *dacoit*, but if he is prepared to lay down his life when the question of defending the honour of the Prophet comes up, then he is truly pious.

Ultimately, the key to finding the voice of the Muslim community thus lay in the active, disinterested sacrifice of the individual in such a symbolic Islamic cause. 'I would fain allow myself to be thrown before fierce lions as a punishment for my love of the Prophet,' Bokhari declared, 'I would deem myself fortunate if those lions were to chew my bones in their jaws and I were conscious enough to hear them cracking.'⁴²

The Shahidganj Agitation: 'A Treasure of Martyrs'

When the Anjuman Islamia appealed to the Gurdwaras Tribunal to restore the Shahidganj mosque to the Muslim community, it was thus attempting to speak for a community whose voices were various and whose perspectives on the political meaning of community were radically different. In fact, this did not prevent these groups from expressing in the early 1930s their common concern about the fate of the Shahidganj mosque. When the Gurdwaras Tribunal initially rejected the appeal of the Anjuman Islamia, a variety of Muslim leaders, including lawyers, ulama, and newspapermen, joined together in an ad hoc committee, the Anjuman-i Tahaffuz-i Masjid Shahidganj, to negotiate with the Sikhs and with the government for the mosque's preservation.⁴³ But when the Sikhs, ignoring the efforts of the

⁴² Translation of speech delivered by Ataullah Shah Bokhari at Muslim Tabligh Conference, Saharanpur, 19 May 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 36/5/35 Poll.

⁴³ Letter, F.H. Puckle (Chief Secretary, Punjab) to all Deputy Commissioners, 19 July 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/14/35. There is also an untitled, typed report by Mian Abdul Aziz, a former chairman of the Lahore Municipal Committee, in the Mian Abdul Aziz Papers, Lahore, which details the activities of the Anjuman-i Tahaffuz-i Masjid Shahidganj during this period.

government to mediate, demolished the mosque on the night of 7 July 1935, it caused a sensation among Muslims in the city. In the eyes of a large number of Muslims, the Shahidganj mosque had itself now become a symbol of the community, a *shahid* itself in the community's defence.

The history of the subsequent agitation in fact demonstrated dramatically the power in the 1930s of such a symbolic cause in mobilizing Muslim opinion in the city. The destruction of the mosque triggered a series of events that culminated in massive demonstrations in Lahore on 19, 20 and 21 July and, ultimately, in police shootings that left over a dozen Muslims dead. Zafar Ali Khan and others rallied Muslims to action in the days after the mosque's destruction, forming a political organization, the Majlis Ittihad-i Millat, to fight for the mosque, and calling for the mobilization of 'blue shirt' volunteers to carry on the agitation.⁴⁴ It was not primarily Zafar Ali Khan's position as a newspaper editor that provided the drive behind the agitation; it was, rather, his effective rhetorical use of the mosque as a dramatic symbol of community identity. The 'blue shirt' movement produced, in the words of the government, 'comparatively few active followers,' but, far more important, it gained 'the active sympathy of a large number of Muslims in Lahore itself.'⁴⁵ When the British attempted to control the situation by exiling four leaders of the agitation, including Zafar Ali Khan, from Lahore, they discovered to their chagrin that it was not any particular leader but the fate of the mosque itself that had galvanized support among Lahore's Muslims. When a large crowd gathered outside the Delhi Gate on the morning of 20 July, attempting to reach the site of the Shahidganj mosque to offer prayers, no Muslim leaders could control it—'all [are] ready to die,' one pro-government Muslim reported; 'they don't listen to anyone'—and only police bullets finally brought the situation under government control.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of July 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 18/7/35; Singh, *Gurdwara Shahidganj*, pp. 80–81.

⁴⁵ Letter, Sir Herbert Emerson (Governor, Punjab) to Viceroy, 18 July 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/14/35 Poll.

⁴⁶ The description is from a letter from Malik Firoz Khan Noon to Sir Fazl-i Husayn, 20 July 1935, in Waheed Ahmad, ed., *Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1976), p. 411.

The martyrdom of more than a dozen Muslims thus provided dramatic proof of the existence of an aroused Muslim community in Lahore, defined by their sacrifice in the community's name. But in the aftermath of the police firing, Muslims who identified with that community still had to wrestle with the contradictions in organization and political expression that the community faced. The British themselves of course strongly encouraged the efforts of men like Malik Firoz Khan Noon, a minister in the government and a protégé of Fazli-Husayn, in their attempts to rally the traditional community leaders associated with the British administration, the 'city gentlemen', *rais*, and municipal commissioners, in order to reassert administrative control over the Muslims of the city.⁴⁷ But such an effort was extremely difficult, as even the British realized, for in the volatile atmosphere prevailing in the city these leaders could hardly be counted on politically to 'deliver the goods'.⁴⁸ Perhaps even more important, however, the British also attempted to encourage strongly the position of the Anjuman Islamia, in spite of its failure before the Gurdwaras Tribunal, as a continuing focus for community control of religious places in the city—a politically malleable embodiment of community identity. The British could hardly now overturn the decision of the Gurdwaras Tribunal and themselves give control of the Shahidganj mosque site to the Anjuman Islamia. Nevertheless, they publicly demonstrated their continuing confidence in the *anjuman's* position as a community representative by announcing the transfer of another Lahore mosque which had long been in government possession, the Shah Chiragh mosque, into the Anjuman Islamia's hands—a gift, as a government communique declared, 'to the Muslim community through the Anjuman Islamia.'⁴⁹

If nothing else, the agitation over the mosque had dramatized the degree to which, by 1935, popular conceptions of community had bypassed the Anjuman Islamia. Perhaps nothing demonstrated this

⁴⁷ Letter, Malik Firoz Khan Noon Sir Fazl-i Husayn, 26 July 1935, in Ahmad, ed., *Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain*, pp. 418–19.

⁴⁸ Sir Herbert Emerson was referring in particular here to the members of the Legislative Council; letter, Emerson to Viceroy, 18 July 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/14/35 Poll.

⁴⁹ Government communique of 13 July 1935, quoted in Singh, *Gurdwara Shahidganj*, p. 79.

better than the launching of a new court case by a group of Lahore Muslims who sought now to regain the site of the Shahidganj mosque through the regular British courts, with arguments which challenged the basic claim of the Anjuman Islamia before the Gurdwaras Tribunal to have represented the Muslim community at all. To punctuate this point, Lahore Muslims instituted their own case not in the name of the Anjuman, or any other Muslim organization, but in the name of the Shahidganj mosque itself, which, in the role of a juristic person, was now made to sue the SGPC on its own behalf for the restoration of its rights as a mosque.⁵⁰ This was an ingenious approach, in effect transforming the mosque from a symbol of the community to being the actual representative of the community in court, a reflection with a vengeance of the charismatic conception of the community that had largely inspired the agitation. But at the same time, the pleading of the mosque itself in court, particularly in opposition to the powerful and well-organized Sikh Central Gurdwaras Committee, provided dramatic evidence, if any were needed, of the complete lack of a comparable organized political alternative among the Muslims—a body on which the community in the Punjab could rely for the expression of its political interests.

The organizational problems of the community were demonstrated in far more concrete terms by the course of the agitation outside the courts. In spite of the formation by Zafar Ali Khan of the Majlis Ittihad-i Millat, the Urdu press in the month following the police firings continued to be primarily responsible for keeping public interest in the agitation at a high level. In spite of the externment of Zafar Ali Khan and the editor of the daily *Siyasat*, Sayyid Habib, from Lahore, the *Zamindar* and the *Siyasat* continued to take the lead in their support of the agitation, joined by innumerable news-sheets which emerged during the course of the agitation, ‘sell[ing] for one *pice* and cater[ing] to the taste of the sensation-loving half-educated public.’ Such publications, as the government put it, exploited ‘the disturbed communal situation through trained news-hawkers who read aloud the numerous bold headlines which cover the

⁵⁰ The case, Mosque known as Masjid Shahid Ganj and others vs. Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, First Appeal no. 244 of 1936, is reported in *All India Reporter* (Lahore) (1938), pp. 369–425.

entire pages of these news-sheets.⁵¹ More important, much of the writing in the press attacked sharply those Muslim leaders who, in the eyes of the press, had failed to provide the sort of leadership the community now required. As the *Siyasat* wrote in attacking those Muslims whose foremost concern was their place in the colonial administration, 'You do not know what sacrifice means. . . . You fear the lords of the Government. You are strangers to love for the Prophet. You love the Prophet of the English.'⁵² Much of the bitterest criticism was directed at those members of the ulama who had refused to give direction to the agitation. This criticism was directed in part at the ulama of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, but far more pointedly at the ulama associated with the Ahrar Party, who, as a result of strategic political alliances, had refused to support the agitation.⁵³ As the *Siyasat* demanded, what place could such political alliances have in a cause such as the defence of the Shahidganj mosque, when the very existence of the community was at stake? 'Of course, you had differences with Zafar Ali and Sayyid Habib,' the newspaper declared, 'but what differences had you with youths who in a state of excitement tore their collars and received bullets in their chests You are responsible for the blood shed outside the Delhi Gate on the 20th and 21st of July and you will have to give account for each drop of blood.'⁵⁴ Though some ulama issued *fatwas* to support the agitation, the *Zamindar* bemoaned the failure of the ulama in general to provide organized leadership to the agitation. 'A prominent but sad feature of the Shahidganj Mosque affair is that the local "ulema" have not published any statement from the religious point of view.' While the uninstructed youths of Lahore 'sacrificed themselves like moths on the

⁵¹ Press branch note, 6 November 1935; P.C.S.A., Press Branch, file 4311.

⁵² *Siyasat* (Lahore), 30 August 1935; PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VA.

⁵³ The Ahrar party was attempting to manoeuvre into an alliance with the Sikhs, with hopes of gaining representation in the ministry after the upcoming elections. The attitude of the Ahrar party to the Shahidganj agitation, at least in its early weeks, is discussed in *Punjab Fortnightly Report* for the second half of July, in National Archives of India, Home Political, file 18/7/35.

⁵⁴ *Siyasat* (Lahore), 13 August 1935; PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IIIA.

lamp of Islam,' the *Zamindar* declared, the ulama, who were once fighters for Islam, remained silent.⁵⁵

A month after the shootings of July 1935, the agitation thus remained, in spite of the enthusiasm that had been aroused, in a state of disorganization. Seemingly, the very emotional character of the call to action in the name of the mosque had precluded effective political organization. In early September 1935, however, several leaders decided on a bold new stroke to try to give the Shahidganj movement, in spite of its symbolic definition, an organized political foundation. At a special conference held at Rawalpindi in the first week of September, they turned not to the ulama but to one of the most prominent of Punjab's rural *pirs*: Sayyid Jamaat Ali Shah of Alipur Sayyidan in Sialkot District was called upon to assume the title of *amir-i millat* and take over the leadership of the agitation. This move may at first seem a strange one, for although such *pirs*, far more than ulama, were the dominant religious figures in rural Punjab, they had not, by and large, previously taken a prominent role in affairs of community.⁵⁶ Unlike the ulama, most *pirs* were tied to a structure of religious authority in the rural areas which centered on local Sufi shrines, their influence diffuse and based largely on inherited powers of spiritual mediation in the villages. Structurally speaking, the religious influence of many *pirs* thus tended to mirror the mediatory political authority of the rural landlords and 'tribal' intermediaries who formed the backbone of the British administration. Pir Jamaat Ali Shah thus seemed an unlikely leader for a 'community' agitation.

But in spite of all this, for many of the urban supporters of the Shahidganj agitation the selection of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah as *amir-i millat* was an effort to come to terms with the contradictions the movement was facing. On the most basic level, the selection represented a calculated gamble aimed at reinvigorating the agitation,

⁵⁵ *Zamindar* (Lahore), 24 August 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IVA.

⁵⁶ There were, however, an increasingly large number of *pirs* in the 19th century with important contacts among the urban ulama, and an interest in the controversies that had grown out of the reformist religious movements of the 19th century. Pir Jamaat Ali Shah was among these. An account of the careers of some of these *pirs* is in David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), chapter 2.

in spite of divisions in the community, by focusing authority in a single leader. The political influence of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah was in fact substantial, far wider than that of any single *alim*, a result not only of the large number of his *murids* in the Punjab but also of his ties to many of the powerful Muslim administrative intermediaries in the countryside. Though educated at several well-known *madrasas* in the Punjab and UP, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, like many rural *pirs*, numbered among his followers both officials and prominent Muslim political leaders.⁵⁷ Unlike most of the *ulama*, he could thus claim an influence that cut into the basic foundations of government political power in the province, and the organizers of the agitation were quick to try to take full advantage of this. Calling not only on Jamaat Ali Shah, but on ‘all Pirs and other

religious leaders to openly identify themselves with the struggle to regain possession of the Shahid Ganj mosque,’ the Rawalpindi conference sanctioned the launching of a movement of civil disobedience to regain the mosque site, a movement to be initiated at Pir Jamaat Ali Shah’s discretion.⁵⁸ Some even hoped that by naming Pir Jamaat Ali Shah as head of the agitation they might be able to embarrass the government by enlisting the thousands of the *pir*’s followers who were serving in the army.⁵⁹

But it was not simply the *pir*’s potential political influence that accounted for his selection at Rawalpindi as *amir-i millat*. For all his connections, the *pir* was in fact a very aged man, ‘easily accessible to influence, and prone to listen to the last person who talks to him.’⁶⁰ But as the *sajjada nishin* of a sufi shrine and a descendant of the Prophet, the *pir* also represented a particular style of Islamic leadership a style of leadership that, ironically, in spite of the *pir*’s

⁵⁷ Among Pir Jamaat Ali Shah’s prominent *murids* was Mir Maqbul Mahmud, the brother-in-law of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, who succeeded Sir Fazl-i Husayn in 1936 as the leader of the Unionist Party. For a biography of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, see Pir Sayyid Akhtar Husain Shah, *Sirat-i Amir-i Millat* (Alipur Sayyidan, 1974).

⁵⁸ CID diary, report on Shahidganj conference, 3 September 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/21/35 Poll.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Appreciation of the Shahidganj Situation, F.H. Puckle, 6 September 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/21/35 Poll.

practical ties to the structure of the British administration, embodied to an important degree the charismatic conception of the Muslim community which had largely inspired the agitation. Though the *pir* himself was a man learned in the shari'a, with important contacts among the ulama at Lahore,⁶¹ the force of his moral authority derived not from his learning in shari'a, as was the case with the ulama, or, for that matter, from his influence in the colonial political system, but from his charisma, the special inheritance that, as a *sayyid* and a *pir*, he could claim from the Prophet and from his own saintly ancestors. This was the foundation of his religious influence among those predominantly rural Muslims who sought his spiritual mediation. Perhaps even more important, it was also the foundation for his recognition now by many as a community leader whose intrinsic charisma, based on his descent, seemed to transcend the organizational contradictions in the Shahidganj movement.⁶²

In fact, his assumption of the leadership of the Shahidganj agitation almost immediately revitalized the movement and led to pledges of support from many of the influential rural *pirs*, including the Chishti *pirs* of Golra and Jalalpur Sharif.⁶³ Pir Jamaat Ali Shah himself announced plans to recruit a million volunteers for the Majlis Ittihadi Millat and to raise money for the establishment of a community *bait al-mal* (treasury),⁶⁴ and he organized a national day of mourning on 20 September for the mosque, which included huge processions and a call for Muslims from all sections of Lahore to meet

⁶¹ Pir Jamaat Ali Shah's contacts were apparently, in particular, with the Barelvi ulama, and he had donated money to the Anjuman Hizb al-Ahnaf: Haider Husain Shah, *Shah-i Jamaat* (Lahore: Maktabah Shah-yi Jamaat, 1973), p. 116; Faruqi, *Tazkirah-i Ulama-yi Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat*, p. 321.

⁶² The potential political significance of such inherited charisma, including descent from the Prophet, is discussed for a somewhat different setting (Morocco), but in comparative perspective in Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

⁶³ *Zamindar* (Lahore), 8 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VA. Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur announced after the Rawalpindi conference that he would attempt to form a Jami'at al-Mashaikh to organize the support of the *pirs*: *Siyasat* (Lahore), 10 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VA.

⁶⁴ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 23 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VIIA.

for united *juma* prayers at the Badshahi mosque.⁶⁵ But in spite of the enthusiasm which the *pir*'s selection as *amir-i millat* generated, he soon found himself subjected as head of the agitation to diverse political pressures which were practically impossible for him to control. Perhaps most important, in spite of his wide rural connections—or, in fact, largely because of them—the *pir* was easily accessible to the political pressures brought to bear by the British administration, and he was quickly forced to back away from the call issued at Rawalpindi for the launching of civil disobedience. 'Deeply as he may have appeared to have committed himself,' the chief secretary wrote immediately after the Rawalpindi conference, 'there is some reason to think that he is not altogether comfortable about his position, and he may retreat from it.' Most important, he added, 'influences are being brought to bear to this end.'⁶⁶ The *pir*, in fact, bowing to such pressure, announced at the end of September that he would postpone any announcement of a political programme for the agitation until he had had a chance to tour the Punjab and other parts of north India in order to consult with political leaders and leading ulama. But after returning from a tour which included consultations at the *urs* (shrine festival) in Ajmer and meetings with important ulama in Budaun and Bareilly in the United Provinces, the *pir* took few concrete steps to organize the agitation. Though he briefly proposed and then repudiated a program of economic boycott of the Hindus, the *pir* found himself largely unable to propose any independent program or to free himself politically from the influence of his wealthy rural *murids* and advisers, who bound him to the British administration. 'All of the gaddi holders,' one Hindu newspaper wrote in analyzing his situation, 'whether Hindu or Muslim, cannot rise against the Government.'⁶⁷

It was not only government influences on the *pir* that made his position an awkward one. The very character of the *pir*'s leadership, with its roots in the tradition of *piri-muridi* in the rural areas,

⁶⁵ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the second half of September 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file, 18/9/35.

⁶⁶ Appreciation of the Shahidganj Situation, F.H. PuckJe, 6 September 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 5/21/35 Poll.

⁶⁷ *Pratap* (Lahore), 23 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IIIB.

generated almost immediate misgivings among a large section of Muslims themselves, who were mistrustful of the blind faith with which the *pir* was regarded by much of his rural following—a faith so strong that, it was rumoured, his *ta'wiz* (protective amulet) had been accepted during the army recruiting campaigns during World War I as a guarantee against enemy bullets. The *pir* was no stranger to sectarian controversy, but in the enthusiasm of the Rawalpindi conference he had pledged to rise above such controversy and had accordingly been accepted by all those who supported the liberation of the site of the mosque. ‘What affords the Faqir the greatest pleasure,’ the *pir* had declared after the conference, ‘is that all the Islamic sects have heartily accepted the Faqir’s services as a servant of Islam.’⁶⁸

But almost immediately some questioned the oath of allegiance to the *pir* that had been taken at the conference, suggesting that it resembled far too closely the traditional oath of fealty to a Sufi *pir* (*bay'a*).⁶⁹ Such criticisms came particularly from those influenced by the reformist schools among the ulama, and this was at least in part responsible for an uproarious scene when Pir Jamaat Ali Shah attempted to deliver an address after Friday prayers at the Jama Masjid in Delhi to a congregation which consisted largely of students from several Delhi *madrasas*.⁷⁰ As one Delhi Muslim wrote to a Lahore newspaper, ‘In the opinion of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah I am a “great infidel”,’ for differing with the *pir* on the question as to whether the Prophet was to be considered as something more than just a human being—long a point of theological controversy between the reformist ulama and many of the Sufi *pirs*. Such differences, he stressed, did not alone prevent his supporting Jamaat Ali Shah’s efforts to regain the site of the Shahidganj mosque, but they did certainly prevent his

⁶⁸ *Inquilab* (Lahore), 15 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VIIA.

⁶⁹ *Inquilab* (Lahore), 28 November 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 4285. One of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah’s lieutenants, Sufi Inayat Muhammad of Pasrur, claimed that in Rawalpindi 50,000 Muslims took an ‘oath of fealty at the hands of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah’ to carry on this ‘purely religious struggle’: *Zamindar* (Lahore), 13 September 1935. PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VIA.

⁷⁰ Delhi Fortnightly Report for the first half of October 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 18/10/35.

accepting the *pir* as *amir-i millat*.⁷¹ For his own part, Jamaat Ali Shah was quick to label those who opposed his leadership as outside the pale of Islam. 'I request the Muslims to arrive at the definite decision,' he declared, 'that they will not say the funeral prayers of [any]one who does not participate in this auspicious movement, nor will they allow his dead body to be buried in their graveyards.'⁷²

For all the promise in Pir Jamaat Ali Shah's leadership as an expression of the community's inherent charisma, therefore, in the end the leadership of the *pir* could not overcome the divisions within the community; indeed, by the end of 1935 the movement was fast moving toward a state of complete collapse. Thrust into a position of political leadership, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah increasingly found it impossible to deal with both the sectarian and the political pressures facing him, and could only, as one government officer reported, 'change his views from day to day.'⁷³ For the leaders of the urban press, the almost pathetic indecisiveness of the *pir* soon seemed nothing less than betrayal. In October, one Lahore daily which had strongly supported the *pir*'s assumption of leadership in the agitation implored him 'to show some regard for the promises made and the speeches delivered at the Rawalpindi conference.'⁷⁴ But by January, it admitted the truth: that 'the Musalmans are still in a state of disintegration Not to speak of 10 lakh volunteers, the Majlis

⁷¹ Letter from Abdul Ghaffar of Delhi, *Inquilab* (Lahore), 29 October 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 4285. The *Inquilab* urged the *pir* to try to avoid such issues of religious controversy. 'Ever since Pir Jamaat Ali Shah has been appointed the Amir of the Muslims for securing the Shahidganj mosque we have been expecting that he will devote his sole attention to the real object, viz. the release of the Shahidganj mosque and will not refer to questions about which the Muslims are not one; but different sections of Muslims make complaints about the Pir at different places': *Inquilab* (Lahore), 22 October 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 4285.

⁷² *Siyasat* (Lahore), 11 September 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. VIA.

⁷³ Punjab Fortnightly Report for second half of December 1935, National Archives of India, Home Political, file 18/12/35.

⁷⁴ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 25 October 1935, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. IXA.

Ittihad-i Millat had not been able to collect even 10 volunteers and its coffers do not contain even 10 rupees today.⁷⁵

The *pir* himself attempted to organize a conference at Amritsar in January 1936 to try to revive the agitation, but this only produced bitter conflict between the more radical urban agitators and some of the *pir*'s wealthy, pro-government *murids*. As a result the *pir* himself, apparently in order to salvage his personal prestige, departed on *hajj*. As one newspaper noted in frustration, far from demonstrating the vitality of an aroused Muslim community in Punjab, the agitation over the mosque had in the end only demonstrated once again the community's disorganization. Indeed, so much had God's chosen community failed in the symbolic task given to it that, as one daily declared, 'a divine visitation is likely to fall upon them.'⁷⁶

Toward Pakistan

The failure of the Shahidganj agitation in 1935 and 1936 provided dramatic evidence of the depth of the political contradictions facing Muslims as they sought to define a community identity within the colonial context. The *pir*'s departure did not end the agitation, for the emotional concern to regain the mosque's site surfaced repeatedly during the succeeding years.⁷⁷ But the *pir*'s failure had demonstrated

⁷⁵ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 12 January 1936, PCSA, Press Branch, file 8331, vol. XIA.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ The Shahidganj mosque agitation went through numerous stages after the *pir*'s departure in 1936 and ended in 1940 only after a final decision by the Privy Council confirmed the site in the hands of the Sikhs. In early 1936, after the failure of the Amritsar conference, the Shahidganj mosque itself became the focus of a small civil disobedience campaign in which groups of Muslims courted arrest while trying to march to the mosque. Later, Muhammad Ali Jinnah came to Lahore as leader of the All-India Muslim League to try to mediate a settlement, but met with little success. In 1937, after the passage of an All-India Muslim League resolution demanding restoration of the site to the Muslims, the Ahrar Party and the Majlis Ittihad-i Millat challenged each other to start civil disobedience to prove their commitment to the cause of the mosque. In 1937, the Muslim League tried to force the passage of a bill in the Unionist-controlled Punjab Legislative Assembly that would have restored the site to the 'Muslim community', a

clearly the essential difficulties the Muslims faced. Split by differing conceptions of the meaning of Muslim community, a large number of Lahore Muslims had focused in 1935 on the Shahidganj mosque, destroyed by the Sikhs, as a symbol of the inherent charisma of the community, a symbol of the community's civilizational inheritance from God and the Prophet, which it was the duty of every Muslim to protect. Beyond politics, beyond the ulama, and even beyond the Law, this was a conception of the community that stressed the symbolic commitment of the individual—a conception which had been expressed most eloquently in the poetry of Iqbal and which, in the early 19th century, the Urdu press of Lahore had taken the lead in popularizing among Lahore's Muslims. But as the course of the agitation had shown, such a view of community was one which, by its very nature, left the community with little political organization. To attempt to organize the community politically for concrete goals was in fact almost to risk denying the primacy of the basic, disinterested, individual commitment to Islamic symbols that defined the community's existence.

The selection of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah as *amir-i millat* represented one effort to resolve this dilemma. The *pir's* position highlighted the potential political significance that leadership based on descent held for Punjab Muslims. Since the *pir's* legitimacy as a leader of the community was derived from sources wholly outside the political structure of Punjab society, he was well placed to transcend the political divisions of Muslim Punjab in order to act in the name of a symbolically defined community. The hope of his supporters was that he would be able to lead a community defined in symbolic terms and yet capable of incorporating the most powerful elements in rural society. But in practice the *pir* found himself a prisoner of his own background as a rural religious leader, a tool in the hands of rural magnates and a focus for sectarian controversy. In spite of its symbolic promise, the leadership of the *pir* thus proved politically ineffective.

In spite of its failure, however, the Shahidganj mosque agitation was historically significant from another perspective. In highlighting

move intended to embarrass the Unionist ministry. Though this move was unsuccessful, it indicated the strongly emotional symbolic appeal the mosque still held. The eventual disappearance of the issue was largely due to its supersession after 1940 by the demand for Pakistan.

the contradictions between the symbolic definition of community identity and the organization of political power within the British system, the Shahidganj agitation pointed the way toward the emergence in the 1940s of another symbol of the Muslim community: the concept of the Islamic state of Pakistan. Support for the concept of Pakistan in fact developed initially in the Punjab among many of those same groups that had supported the Shahidganj mosque agitation, including the leading editors of the Muslim press in the cities and, somewhat later, the Sufi *pirs* of the countryside. The concept also eventually gained the support of many of the rural magnates who had dominated politics in the Punjab under the British.⁷⁸ But the success of the Pakistan idea resulted not just from the political support of these groups but from the symbolic resolution that the idea offered to the long-standing contradictions of Muslim community politics under the British. Like the Shahidganj mosque, the Pakistan concept offered to the individual a symbolic focus for the active, public expression of Islamic identity. At the same time, it provided a powerful institutional base for the expression of the community's political solidarity and for the competing interests of the Muslim elites who composed it.

But the creation of Pakistan also evoked considerable controversy. For many of the ulama in particular, the popular dissemination of the substance of Islamic law and practice had long been more important than the commitment to what were often viewed as hollow symbols. Many of the ulama of Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind and the Ahrar, who had initially opposed the Shahidganj mosque agitation, also opposed the creation of Pakistan as a perversion of their own view of community and their own concern with personal Islamic reform. Islamic symbols, as many saw it, could easily be divorced from the substance of Islamic life—a fact which was perhaps nowhere more poignantly illustrated than in the fate of the Shahidganj site itself. In spite of its significance as a symbol of community identity in British India, after partition the Shahidganj site took on a different symbolic connotation. As a symbol of the government's commitment to the protection of minorities, the Shahidganj site was not reconverted after partition into a mosque but was maintained officially as a *gurdwara* by the Pakistan government,

⁷⁸ For an account of the triumph of the Pakistan idea in the 1946 election campaign. See Chapter 8, and I.A. Talbot, 'The 1946 Punjab Elections,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 14 (January 1980).

in a country now with virtually no Sikh population. Clearly, Islamic symbols could have uncertain political lives, and to guarantee that the symbolic Pakistan state did not come to a similar fate, the ulama fought hard in independent Pakistan for the establishment of a state that would enforce the shari'a in the workings of society itself.

But although the influence of the ulama after partition was substantial and led to increasing pressure for the creation of a true Islamic community as the ulama defined it, the Pakistan state nevertheless retained for the majority of Pakistanis its own intrinsic symbolic significance in defining the community. Like the Shahidganj mosque, the Pakistan state remained first and foremost a symbol of the community's charisma bequeathed to it by the revelation of the Prophet. As supporters of Pakistan thus argued in 1947, the creation of Pakistan stood, at base, for nothing more complicated than the political realization of the concept of *tawhid*, which Iqbal himself had defined as the foundation of Muslim community. Transcending everyday politics, and yet at the same time defining the Islamic nature of the political system, the meaning of Pakistan in this context, like that of the Shahidganj mosque, could be summed up in a single, popular couplet:

Pakistan ka matlab kya
La ilaha illa allah
 (What is the meaning of Pakistan?
 There is no God but Allah.)

‘Divine Displeasure’ and Muslim Elections: The Shaping of Community in 20th-century Punjab

For Jinnah and the Punjab Muslim League, the provincial elections of February 1946 marked a sweet moment of triumph. Whatever organizational problems the Punjab Muslim League faced, the elections of 1946 provided the League with a public mandate to speak in the name of Punjab’s Muslims. Even though denied an immediate role in the government by the formation of a Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition, the electoral success of the Muslim League in Punjab (and in Bengal) allowed Jinnah to proclaim his demand for Pakistan as an expression of popular will. With the triumph of the Muslim League in the 1946 elections, the demand for Pakistan as an expression of God’s will for the Muslim community, and as an expression of the popular will of a Muslim ‘nation’, were for the moment, fused.

But a closer look at the 1946 elections and other pre-partition elections—and at Pakistan’s history since 1947—suggests the ambiguities in this equation. Indeed, the history of elections provides not only a key element in the political history of the Pakistan movement, but also a window on cultural contradictions within the movement. Though the League successfully used the electoral system to legitimize the Pakistan demand, the very success of its appeal to religious ideology in some ways challenged the principles underlying the electoral system itself. Though elections played a critical role in the political definition of Muslim ‘community’ in the 20th century, the system of electoral representation in Punjab was itself deeply embedded also in the political and ideological structure of the colonial system. The attempt to define an independent Muslim ‘nation’ through the colonial electoral system was thus fraught with contradictions.

Nothing, in fact, indicated this more dramatically than the flood of election petitions which followed the 1946 poll. Of the 73 Assembly

seats captured by the Muslim League, the results in at least 45 were legally challenged in the months following the elections.¹ In petition after petition, defeated Muslim candidates charged that much of the League's pro-Pakistan electoral rhetoric in 1946 was corrupt within the context of British electoral rules—that, viewed within the ideological contours defining the electoral system, the religious appeal for Pakistan was illegitimate. Though few of these challenges were decided before the implementation of partition rendered them moot, they nevertheless indicated the contradictions inherent in the attempt to define Pakistan as an expression of popular, religious will, measured within Punjab's electoral system. But at the heart of this contradiction lay not any fundamental antithesis between 'democracy' and 'Islam'. Rather, at the root of the tension lay different conceptions of Muslim 'community'—conceptions fostered by the structure of colonial rule on the one hand, and by the emergence of popular Muslim politics on the other. And colonial elections provided the arena in which these conceptions met.

Separate Electorates, 'Divine Displeasure', and Election Rituals

In assessing the role of the British electoral system in shaping the meaning of Muslim 'community', one must inevitably begin with a discussion of separate electorates. Separate electorates were first established in some municipal elections in Punjab in the 1880s, and were extended to cover provincial Legislative Council elections—following the model already established in Bengal and United Provinces—in 1919. But although the subject of extensive contemporary controversy, the significance of separate electorates in defining the meaning and character of Muslim community in British India has been the subject of relatively little sustained analysis by historians. Contemporary opponents of separate electorates in the Punjab in the 1920s charged that the system itself was a central element in the creation of communal identities in Punjabi politics. As Raja Narendra Nath observed, for example, in a note to the 1929

¹ For a listing of the constituencies in which petitions were filed, see Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Panjab, 1920–1947* (Delhi: Manohar, 1987), pp. 122–27.

Punjab Reforms Committee, 'I do not agree with the view that the communal outlook of the Council will remain the same, whatever be the system of electoral machinery. The greater the recognition given to communal differences, the more pointed and pronounced they become.'² Separate electorates were, in his eyes, a central constitutive element in the creation of community identities in politics, and thus of communalism.

But this view was not shared by all. Others argued that separate electorates were not a constitutive element in the development of communalism, but rather an administrative response to a society already divided on religious lines. As Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, who was himself no champion of separate electorates, argued in response to Raja Narendra Nath's critique in 1929, communal tension had developed independently of the existence of separate electorates, and in such circumstances, separate electorates served merely as an institutional expedient to control such tension and prevent its worsening. The 'premature' introduction of joint electorates, he argued, would run 'the grave risk of intensifying differences and widening the schism between the two major communities.'³ Separate electorates were, in this view, a means, as some British officials had themselves argued when they were initially introduced, of drawing political conflict based on community identity into the Legislature, and thus controlling it, even as elections were introduced.⁴ The causes of communalism were, of course, the focus of voluminous discussion—as they still are—but from this perspective electoral politics were not the central element in defining a politically significant community identity.

In fact, the analysis of the role of separate electorates in the development of communal identities must await a more detailed examination than has hitherto been undertaken. Little has actually been written on their practical workings. Although many of the critics of separate electorates urged that their chief effect was to block the

² *Report of the Punjab Reforms Committee*, 1929, Annexure, p. xiii.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19. Sir Sikander was Chairman of the Committee.

⁴ A good discussion of the rationale underlying the original introduction of separate electorates in Punjab municipalities in the 1880s is in N. Gerald Barrier, 'The Punjab Government and Communal Politics, 1870–1908,' *Journal of Asian Studies* (May 1968), pp. 534–39.

formation of cross-religious alliances in popular political organization, information even on this remains inconclusive. There is little doubt that separate electorates helped to channel Muslim, Sikh and Hindu politics in the Punjab in distinct directions, but there is also evidence to suggest that such electorates did not obviate the need for crossreligious alliances in local politics. So long as networks of influence cut across communal boundaries, as they almost invariably did, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu politicians could not afford to ignore the influence wielded by powerful men in their constituencies, whatever their religions. When a Unionist candidate for a Muslim seat in Ferozepore District thus tried to line up local support for his candidacy in 1937, his first concern was to win over rural leaders, Sikh and Muslim alike, who could be expected to wield influence with rural Muslim voters—and alliances were established with both Sikh and Muslim *zaildars*.⁵ Evidence of such cross-cutting influence emerges clearly in some election petitions. A charge of undue influence in a 1937 election petition challenging the election of Seth Ram Narain Virmani in the Lyallpur and Jhang (General) Constituency, for example, focused almost entirely on influence allegedly exercised in favor of the Seth by Muslim zamindars, particularly the Shah Jiwana Sayyids, who were not voters in this Hindu constituency.⁶ Conversely, there is little doubt that in Sind and western Punjab, Hindu moneylenders continued to exercise influence in rural Muslim constituencies, usually in alliance with Muslim leaders, even after separate electorates were established—in spite of the frequent argument by Muslim leaders that separate electorates were essential for the protection of rural Muslim voters against undue Hindu influence.⁷

⁵ Interview, Syed Amjad Ali, 23 November 1974. ‘Zaildars’ were local notables in charge of an administrative sub-division.

⁶ Report of the First Election Petitions Commission, Punjab, Malik Mathra Das vs. Lala Ram Narain, Lyallpur and Jhang (General) Constituency. *Punjab Gazette*, 6 May 1938, part I, pp. 634–35.

⁷ An assessment of the role of separate electorates in shaping such relationships in western Punjab might be made by comparing District Board elections, which were conducted in the 20th century under joint electorates, with Legislative Assembly elections, for which electorates were separate. Such an assessment has not, so far as I am aware, been undertaken.

But what role, then, did separate electorates play? Separate electorates did not create a Muslim political arena isolated from the politics of other communities. But whatever the ambiguities in the actual operation of separate electorates—and the limitations in our knowledge of their operation—an assessment of their structural role in the evolution of political concepts of Muslim community is still vitally important. Indeed, an examination of their place in the electoral system is critical in understanding how the relationship between popular conceptions of religious community and the structure of colonial politics evolved in the 20th century. Separate electorates did create an arena in which Muslim leaders—and individual Muslim voters—sought to use the concept of Muslim community to mediate their involvement in the power structures tied to the colonial state. But much of the contemporary debate over the significance of separate electorates reflected a paradox. Separate electorates defined an arena in which the structure of the colonial state and popular Muslim politics came together. But the concepts of community shaped by popular Muslim politics and those shaped by the institutional definitions of the British colonial state did not always coincide.

However important the language of Muslim community that underlay them, the principles that defined the introduction of separate electorates were, on one level, drawn directly from the principles that had long helped to justify the organization of the colonial state. Though identifying the principles on which the British colonial regime rested its authority is not always an easy task, there is little doubt that the colonial state increasingly justified its authority in the late 19th century as the regulator and protector of a society of innumerable communities, bound together by the British in a larger, rationalized structure. Important for the British in this context was the assumption that these communities were themselves defined by localized principles— principles which offered no challenge, no potential alternative, to the authority of the colonial state. Indian society was organized, as the British saw it, primarily around communities of caste and kinship, communities defined essentially by genealogy and descent.⁸

⁸ In Punjab, the key operative term in this connection was 'tribe'. The conception of a society constructed around 'tribes', however vaguely and ambiguously defined, was important for many British officials in the

British definitions of separate electorates fit into this context. Though the British recognized Muslim identities in many administrative contexts, they had nevertheless sought to dissociate the state in the late 19th century from any appeal to religious symbolism or religious ideology. The definition of Muslim community embodied in separate electorates was thus one strongly detached from the personal beliefs of its members; community in this context was, as Kenneth Jones has suggested in discussing the census, little more than 'an aggregate of individuals united by a formal definition.'⁹ In this, religious identity became, like 'tribal' identity, less a matter of ideology and belief than of common descent. For the British the importance of such a definition of Muslim community lay in the fact that it allowed them to appropriate the concept to strengthen their own political system, while underscoring the illegitimacy of appeals to religious symbols as defining elements for the state system. Indeed, such a definition of community was closely tied to the principles on which the British had in large part come to justify the foundations of their rule.

The application of these principles to elections represented one more means by which the British sought to maintain their power as they sought to shape the new political conditions of the 20th century. Though the system of electoral representation introduced into India by the British drew legitimacy from the model of representative politics in England, its roots were embedded deeply in 19th-century British ideologies of colonial rule. The introduction of local and provincial elections into India grew in large part, as Anil Seal and many of the 'Cambridge' historians argued, 'from the practical requirements of maintaining support as the Raj penetrated more deeply into Indian society in order to increase its revenue.'¹⁰ In seeking, through elections

development of late 19th-century Punjab administration and, perhaps more importantly, in the development of an ideology of imperial authority that explained and justified the colonial state's relationship to Punjabi society.

⁹ Kenneth Jones, 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census,' in N. Gerald Barrier, ed., *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), pp. 83–85.

¹⁰ This argument is developed in Anil Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India,' in Gallagher, Johnson and Seal, *Locality, Province and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

and nominations, to draw local leadership more fully into the state structure, the British thus sought to legitimate the increasingly strong ties of the state to local society. But in defining the state's relationship to local society, the vision of India as a conglomeration of local communities continued to be central.

The meaning of separate electorates was deeply embedded in these ideological presuppositions. The supposition about the underlying character of the community that underlay the definition of separate electorates is illustrated by the electoral rules within which such electorates operated. In Punjab (and elsewhere) the British introduced at the time of the first elections held under the 1919 Montagu Chelmsford reforms, an election rule that sought to limit sharply the role that religious rhetoric could legitimately play in election contests, even within the context of separate electorates. Such limitations fell within the context of rules adopted to limit in elections the corrupt exercise of what the British called 'undue influence'. This included specifically 'any attempts to induce a candidate or voter to believe that he . . . will be rendered an object of divine displeasure or spiritual censure.'¹¹ The origins of this limitation on election rhetoric lay in the history of election law in the United Kingdom. As one British official declared in the Central Legislative Council in 1920, priests had long been debarred in British election contests from appealing to 'the fears or terrors, or superstition of the people,' or from holding out 'hopes of reward here or hereafter.' Such prohibitions had in the United Kingdom been applied particularly to Ireland. But, he declared, they were perhaps even more important in India, where 'at the present time...various influences of a particularly sinister character are at work.'¹² Though such rules had no specific reference to separate electorates, they highlighted the character of the religious identity that separate constituencies in the electoral arena were intended to capture. Obedience to God's will (or to the *shariat*) had no legitimate place in defining Muslim identity as it was encapsulated in separate electorates. Indeed, within the structure of the colonial political system, religion was defined as essentially a form of 'ethnic' identity—an identity

¹¹ Krishna Swarup, *The Punjab Elections Manual* (Lahore, 1936).

¹² Speech of Sir William Vincent in the Indian Legislative Council on the Indian Elections Offences and Inquiries Law (Act XXXIX of 1920), 25 September 1920. India Office Library and Records, LIP&J/6/1675.

unconnected with the assertion of any religious principles for individual behavior or for the definition of the larger political system.

On one level, the establishment of separate electorates thus served to assimilate religious identity to the principles that in the late 19th century defined the colonial state system generally—principles that were now dramatized in the structure of the electoral arena. But this was not the only sense in which the electoral arena served for Muslims to dramatize visions of community. If the structure of the electoral system was defined largely by the state, the role of elections in local Muslim politics also fit into another form of local politics that had long served to define the nature of local community identity. Indeed, elections came increasingly to serve in 20th-century India as a form of ‘public ritual’. As some historians have increasingly argued in recent years, such rituals could often be at the heart of community definition. Public rituals in north India traditionally focused largely on religious observances—Muharram, Dussehra or other festivals—at which values that defined local communities were publicly dramatized. To be sure, these observances were not devoid of competition. Competition in performance and in patronage was in fact central to their significance. But such competition was subsumed within the overall structure of the festival, whose enactment often suggested a common group definition. The competition in these ‘public arenas’, as one historian has called them, in fact created a model in the imaginations of the participants for the local community itself, a conception in which the idea of community transcended the conflicts of local magnates, of castes, *biradaris*, or neighborhoods, which were a central fact of everyday life. They suggested the existence of a symbolic unity that transcended such divisions.¹³

Elections certainly differed in many respects from such religious rituals, not least in that the proportion of the population that could vote in colonial elections was limited.¹⁴ But they nevertheless represented

¹³ The concept of local religious rituals as ‘public arenas’ serving to define community is developed in Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

¹⁴ In Punjab Council elections, the proportion of the total population that could vote was something under three percent. This percentage increased considerably with the expansion of the franchise after 1935. But under 50

in important respects a redefinition of 'public arena' ritual. The role of elections as community rituals has been, in fact, the subject of considerable writing on many societies. While the literature on voting behavior is enormous, the role of voting as a symbolic act affirming social and cultural identity has been stressed in much historical writing relating to the United States, Europe and elsewhere. For many in 19th-century Europe, as historians have shown, the vote was often far less important as an instrument for changing policy or governments than as a means of symbolic affirmation of identification with a social group, class or community.¹⁵ 'Rituals' surrounding elections, which defined symbolically competing groups, also served frequently to define the relation between leaders and followers in constituting particular communities, even as they symbolically dramatized how such groups fit into the still larger community of the nation.¹⁶ The comparison with the role of local religious festivals in India is very suggestive. Speeches, songs, processions and other election 'rituals' helped to define not only competing groups, but also the values of the broader society that bound the competing sides together in a public arena, even as they engaged rhetorically in what often became a form of ritualized combat.¹⁷ A recent article on contemporary elections in India has suggested a view of modern Indian elections that is much the same. Elections have served, it is argued, as a massive ritual 'performance',

percent of the adult male population was probably eligible to vote in the 1937 Assembly elections. There is some discussion of the franchise in *Report of the Punjab Reforms Committee*, 1929, pp. 11–44.

¹⁵ For one recent work stressing such an interpretation, see Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

¹⁶ In much of Europe and America, political parties played a critical role in this process, by mediating between the cultural identifications of individuals and the principles defining the state. For a general discussion of election rituals in the US, see Jean Baker, 'The Ceremonies of Politics: 19th-Century Rituals of National Affirmation,' in William J. Cooper, Jr, Michael F. Bolt, and John McCardell, eds, *A Master's Due: Essays in Honor of David Herbert Donald* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ For some German examples, see Suval, pp. 17–20.

through which 'Indians reaffirm the unity of the nation and the investment of power in the rulers by the ruled.'¹⁸

But in colonial India, elections nevertheless differed strikingly from local religious rituals in the relationship that they defined between local communities and the state. The role of religious ritual in community definition in the late 19th century was shaped not only by the traditional character of such religious festivals in defining ritually the power of precedence and patronage, but also by the relative independence of such rituals from the authority of the state. Indeed, the particular role of such rituals in shaping community identities in the late 19th century was in part a product of the self-conscious withdrawal of the colonial state from a direct role in the patronage of religious ritual.¹⁹ Elections themselves bridged this dissociation of the state from local community rituals. The introduction of elections as increasingly important institutions in the colonial political system brought local ritual competitions for precedence directly into the institutional structure of the state.

But in doing so, elections also brought together two different conceptions of the political meaning of Muslim community. Within the structure of separate electorates, the community was a fixed entity, rooted in a shared sense of common identity, but defined bureaucratically by the state. But within the framework of public arena ritual, the notion of community was a fluid one, defined by values asserted in the context of public competition and negotiation between leaders and followers. It was the collision of these two conceptions of community that ultimately defined for elections such an important—though in the end ambiguous—role in the development of 20th-century Muslim communalism, and, finally, in the movement for the creation of a Muslim state.

¹⁸ Walter Hauser and Wendy Singer, 'The Democratic Rite: Celebration and Participation in the Indian Elections,' *Asian Survey*, vol. 26, no. 9 (September 1986) p. 942. Hauser and Singer see Indian elections as fitting into the Indian ritual tradition, with little influence from western 'democratic' philosophy. More problematically, they see this 'democratic ritual' as growing perhaps out of 'ancient Indian political philosophy.'

¹⁹ This point is stressed by Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*.

Punjabi Elections and the Rhetoric of Community

A brief examination of the workings of Muslim elections in Punjab, and of the role of the rhetoric of community in such elections, may help to illustrate this. Though separate electorates were instituted by the British and were shaped by the principles underlying colonial authority, the conception of community that they embodied was one also espoused openly by many Muslims. For many Muslim political leaders, separate electorates served to affirm the Muslim community as an electoral community within the colonial state structure, and thus helped to legitimize their claims to serve as 'representatives' within that system. Such a view of community was also held by many Muslim voters. As a Delhi Muslim wrote to Mian Muhammad Shafi in 1931, 'I do not like joint electorates. I wish my representative *to be my representative* and of no one else . . . I would prefer not to have any representative at all,' he declared, than to have a representative dependent for his position 'on rivals and antagonists'—on men, in other words, who did not belong to the essential community being represented.²⁰ In such a view, 'representation' was only made possible by a basic identity between the voter and the representative—an identity which could be maintained only when constituencies themselves were defined so that no extraneous elements could enter into this relationship. This in fact presumed a political conception of community as a fixed, definable entity—and a relationship between such communities and the state much like that implicit in the structure of British authority.

But for many Muslims, the role of elections in defining community was quite different. The assumption that communities were fixed entities that could be tapped by the state belied the ways that such identities were in fact shaped for many by the very process of politics itself. What gave this greatest significance was the fact that most Muslims, in practice, belonged to a variety of potential communities at the same time—communities based on locality, language, and *biradari*, as well as religion. Elections in 20th-century Punjab, whether fought under joint electorates (as in District Board elections),

²⁰ Letter, Honorary Secretary, (Ijaz Husain?), Husain Manzil, Delhi to Mian Muhammad Shafi, 2 April 1931. Muslim League Papers, Karachi. Punjab Provincial Muslim League Correspondence, vol. III. Emphasis in original.

or under separate electorates (as in most municipality and Council elections after 1920), revolved far more frequently around the conflicting networks of influence of powerful *rais* and *biradari* leaders than they did around issues of religious solidarity. The 'ritual' of elections thus played a potentially critical role in balancing and defining the political meaning of these identities within the political system.

But in this context, the potential significance of separate electorates was ambiguous. Separate electorates gained significance for many Muslim leaders not because they excluded all 'rivalries and antagonisms' in defining the shape of representation, but, quite to the contrary, because they defined an important political place for the concept of Muslim community in a system in which rivalries and antagonisms among Muslims were endemic. For many, the bureaucratic framing of the Muslim community as an overarching vessel for competitive elections projected a communal unity that could subsume the divisions among Muslims that shaped the electoral process itself. But for many others the fear was that separate electorates would marginalize the rhetorical appeal to Islam in the dynamics of community representation. The fixing of an overarching bureaucratic definition of community threatened to downplay personal commitment to Islam as a central element within the community's public construction. Though many supported separate electorates for their symbolic value, many others thus feared their problematic impact on the meaning of Muslim community itself.

Such dangers were articulated, for example, by a group of Muslims in the town of Simla, who warned in the 1930s of the dangers inherent in the introduction of separate electorates into the Simla Municipality. Though undoubtedly of symbolic value, such electorates, they stated, would inevitably cause Muslims to compete for public power not under the banner of Islam, but in the names of their own factions and *biradaris*. 'We are not against separate electorates,' they wrote, ' . . . but there is a grave danger.'²¹ Their fear, in fact, was that the rhetoric and ritual of community unity would, in these circumstances, be

²¹ Letter, President, Anjuman Islamia, Senior Vice-President, Municipal Committee, Simla and others to Secretary, All-India Muslim League Working Committee, 26 August (?) 1939. Muslim League Papers, Karachi, vol. 128. All-India Muslim League Working Committee, 1939.

completely undermined. In other towns, some Muslim leaders complained that separate electorates tended to foster public divisions among Muslim sects as well. Such was the argument of Maulana Sanaullah of Amritsar, for example, a leader of the *Ahl-i Hadis* who saw elections as a central source of public division and competition among Muslim religious groups. 'However beneficial elections may be,' he wrote in a 1937 editorial in the weekly *Ahl-i Hadis*, 'in our opinion their harm is greater than their benefit.'²²

In fact, an examination of elections and election petitions in the 1930s in Punjab suggests the ambiguous role of religious rhetoric in this situation. It is, of course, impossible to understand the politics of Punjab's elections without discussing the political configurations in each constituency, and the positions of each of Punjab's major Muslim political parties—the Ahrar, the *Ittihad-i Millat*, Muslim League, and the Unionist Party. But the focus here will not be on the conflicts between these parties, or on the ways in which they attempted to use Islam for their own political purposes in the context of separate electorates. Rather, using the evidence of election petitions, the focus will be on the political contradictions created by the use of religious rhetoric within the framework of Punjab's new electoral structure.

Such contradictions were less evident in the rural than in the urban areas, as it was in the cities that the intersection between elections and 'public arena' rituals was clearest. Most elections in the Punjab countryside hinged largely on *biradari* identities and on the power of landed magnates, and although religious influence played an important role in some of these, in most rural elections, hierarchical patterns of political influence continued to predominate. Election petitions charging undue religious influence in rural elections thus tended to focus not on the power of public religious rhetoric, which was extremely limited, but rather on the direct exercise of personal influence by religious leaders on their followers.²³ There was thus little

²² *Ahl-i Hadis* (Amritsar), 15 January 1937.

²³ A petition was filed, for example, contesting the election in Okara in 1937 on the grounds that Sayyids of Shergarh and others represented themselves *aspirs* and 'threatened the voters throughout the constituency that unless the voters voted for the respondent they would be rendered an object of divine displeasure and otherwise put to trouble.' Sudhansu Bhushan Sen and Madan Gopal Poddar, *Indian Election Cases, 1935–1951* (Bombay: N.M.

to suggest that elections had called forth a new relationship between the population and the state which was reflected in new kinds of communal rhetoric. Indeed, the rituals of most rural elections operated largely to reinforce existing structures of power.²⁴ Charges of the exercise of undue religious influence were in most rural constituencies much like charges of bribery or treating—charges which simply illustrated the means by which rural leaders had, through wealth and patronage, long exercised and legitimized their local power.

But in the cities (and in a few rural constituencies after 1937) the situation was different. There, the changing relationship in the 20th century between the populace, the state and local leaders was played out far more directly in the conduct of elections. And this was reflected in the rhetoric of religious community that suffused many of these elections as voters selected their representatives. The rhetoric of community was in fact central to the political ritual through which the simultaneous ties of elected representatives to the people and to the state were legitimized. But in the context of separate electorates, the language of religious community took on a special character. Ironically, the logic of separate electorates themselves often required that Muslim candidates label their opponents as enemies of Islam if they were to underscore their own Islamic commitments within an

Tripathi, 1951), pp. 915–16. Though these charges were thrown out on the grounds of inadequate particulars, such charges were also made in other cases.

²⁴ Though it is not the main subject of this chapter, election petitions provide considerable evidence of the ways that existing hierarchies of power were transferred into the electoral arena. Charges of treating, or feeding voters at the polls, were quite common, and suggested the common expectation that rural patrons would feed their followers when they were called out to assist them. There is little doubt that rural elections also had a ritual aspect that reaffirmed bonds of reciprocity between rural leaders and followers. As one witness declared before the Simon Commission, supporters of particular candidates often came to the polls from their villages in a body in the rural areas; ‘in one district they came with bands playing in front of them’ (Indian Statutory Commission, Oral Evidence, Lahore, vol. I, Evidence of Nawab Muzaffar Khan). But elections apparently played a limited ritual role in the 1920s and 1930s in incorporating voters into larger communities, through appeals to party or to broader symbols.

arena in which all candidates were—at least in terms of state definitions—Muslims.

The forms such contests took were, of course, various. In some cases this involved simply attempts to emphasize in the electoral arena longstanding sectarian cleavages among Muslims. An example comes from a 1937 election petition in Karnal District that challenged the publication of a poster equating a vote for a Shia candidate with a vote against Islam. Circulated widely in villages in Karnal District (and perhaps in other constituencies as well), this poster quoted *fatwas* from leading ulama suggesting that a vote for a Shia candidate was a vote for a *kafir*. 'Let Sunnis vote only for Sunni candidates. It is not lawful (*jaiz*) to vote for Shia candidates . . . It is not free from sin (*masiyat*),' said one. 'To say nothing of voting,' another declared, 'it is prohibited to a Sunni of correct principles to sit with them or to assist them, to follow their funerals or to bury them in their [that is, Sunni] graveyards.'²⁵ Within a framework in which all voters were technically Muslim, sectarian divisions became a frame of competition for the moral leadership of the community. But, as an election tribunal itself acknowledged, the impact of this on rural voters, whose votes were shaped primarily by patronage, was probably quite limited.²⁶

But elsewhere the public, ritual redefinition of the community was far more central to the electoral process. In Hoshiarpur District in 1937, charges of corrupt practices filled an election petition filed by the losing candidate in the Hoshiarpur West constituency, Ahrar Party leader Chaudhri Afzal Haq. This petition was in the end rejected by a provincial Election Commission, but it nevertheless raised critical and difficult questions about the use of public rhetoric in politically defining the Muslim community—questions that in the end illustrated the underlying contradictions in the whole election process. In this case also, the petition charged that the winning candidate and his

²⁵ The quotations are from *fatwas* by Mazhar Ahmad, Naib Inam of the Fatehpuri Mosque, Delhi, and Faqir Sayyid Muhammad Ahmad Kadri of Wazir Khan's Mosque, Lahore, respectively. Sen and Poddar, *Indian Election Cases*, pp. 431–32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 433–34. The publication of this poster was ruled a corrupt practice in Karnal, implicitly limiting the freedom of the election through threats of 'divine displeasure,' but the election tribunal itself questioned the extent of this poster's impact on Karnal's rural voters.

agents (Rana Nasarullah Khan, who stood on the Unionist ticket) had sought to portray Chaudhri Afzal Haq as a *kafir*, a man who was a traitor to Islam. This amounted, the petition charged, to a threat of ‘divine displeasure’ intended to sway the election and thus amounted to corrupt electoral rhetoric. Whatever the image of unity conveyed by separate electorates, in this case the election hinged on contesting claims to be a ‘true’ Muslim, contesting against another who was false, thus, in effect, turning the public electoral arena into a test of the nature of Muslim identity.

Chaudhri Afzal Haq and other Ahrar leaders were accused during the campaign with having done ‘grave injury to the Muslim community in connection with the Shahidganj mosque’ agitation, a charge punctuated by the circulation of a group of supposedly maimed and dismembered ‘victims’ of the Lahore Shahidganj firing in the constituency.²⁷ The connections between Chaudhri Afzal Haq’s bona fides as a Muslim and his actions in the Shahidganj affair were underscored by his portrayal in his opponent’s campaign literature as a man who had refused to support the Muslim ‘side’ in the Shahidganj affair, and had instead spoken in support of the Sikhs. As one antiAhrar poster declared,

The Chaudhri neglects the Muslims and offers himself as a sacrifice for the Hindus. It is not a flower but a hidden thorn that is found in the heart of the Bulbul.

Another election poster continued the theme: ‘You saved your house and allowed the Shahidganj Mosque to be demolished so that the Ahrar may flourish.’ But ‘He too [God] will look after his House. If the Majlis-i Ahrar does not propitiate his anger by penitence,’ then, the poster declared, the ‘house’ of no Ahrari will be safe. Such language, the petitioners charged, seemed to threaten divine retaliation

²⁷ The Shahidganj Mosque agitation began in 1935 after the destruction of the Shahidganj Mosque (or Gurdwara) by a group of Sikhs and the subsequent police-firing on a crowd of Muslims which left many wounded and dead. The twists and turns of the subsequent agitation were complex, but the Ahrar were a target of great criticism because they had opposed the launching of the agitation in 1935, in part because they were angling for a political alliance with the Sikhs in opposition to the Unionist Party. For an account of the first part of the agitation, see Chapter 6.

for an Ahrar vote. Though Chaudhri Afzal Haq, for his part, countered by suggesting that his opponent was a Mirzai (an Ahmadi), this only underscored the importance of the use of election rhetoric to attempt to redraw the boundaries of the community in public. Though the election tribunal found most of these charges insubstantial enough to warrant overturning the election for undue religious influence, this rhetoric nevertheless suggested the ways that electoral participation had itself become a test of community solidarity. In spite of separate electorates, commitment to Islam was now defined not by fixed criteria, but by acts themselves performed in the public arena. Indeed, the electoral arena itself became increasingly the site in which the bonds of political community were forged.²⁸

But such a process was not without severe contradictions, contradictions which derived largely from principles intended simultaneously to give a voice to the people and to maintain the principles of authority supporting the colonial state. Nowhere were these brought home more clearly than in a series of challenged elections fought out in the city of Amritsar in the late 1930s. The overturning of the Amritsar Assembly election in 1937, and the bitter legal challenges to the subsequent by-election in 1938, suggested how pervasive the rhetoric of Muslim community had become in Amritsar's politics. But at the same time, the legal challenges to these elections illustrated graphically the underlying tensions operating in the British political system.

Dr Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, the successful candidate in the 1937 election, was unseated on a petition that hinged largely on charges of spiritual 'undue influence'. The heart of the charge was that agents of both Kitchlew and the Ahrar candidate had directly invoked the Quran in attacking their opponent, Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq, who stood on the ticket of the Unionist Party. Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari, a leader of the Ahrar, was in fact charged by Muhammad Sadiq with having urged repeatedly in public declarations that 'to vote for the Unionist Party candidate is *haram*.' As the Election Commission decided, this represented a direct appeal to the prohibitions of the Quran in order to limit the free exercise of voting. But as the

²⁸ Report of the Second Election Petitions Commission, Punjab, Chaudhri Afzal Haq vs. Rana Nasar Ullah Khian, Hoshiarpur West (Muhammadan) Constituency. *Punjab Gazette*, 3 September 1937, part 1, pp. 1195–1211.

Commission also admitted, the force of this prohibition owed little to Sayyid Ataullah Shah's reputation as a religious scholar. Its power derived instead from his reputation as a public leader of the community. Sayyid Ataullah Shah 'is a political leader of repute,' the Commission wrote in its judgement, 'and it is in evidence that thousands flock to hear him speak.' The prohibitions articulated by Bokhari gained force as they were perceived as reflecting the voice of the community. And this in turn suggested the degree to which the individual's obedience to God— and hence his personal Muslim identity—was intimately intertwined in the political arena with his obedience to the community.

This was made even clearer in the charges of corrupt electoral activity filed against Mian Feroze-ud-Din Ahmad, an agent of Dr Kitchlew, in the same election. Mian Feroze-ud-Din, a Lahore politician, was accused of attempting to bind Muslim audiences to vote for Dr Kitchlew by religious oath. In his public speeches, Mian Feroze-ud-Din charged that the Unionist candidate, Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq, had 'betrayed the cause of the Muslim community' by his support of the Government's actions in the Shahidganj Mosque firing. That support of the community's 'cause' in this context had become deeply entwined with the maintenance of personal Muslim identity was indicated by one Muslim, who confessed that on hearing this charge against Muhammad Sadiq, he had begun 'to feel that one who could do such things could not be a Mussalman.' But Feroze-ud-Din Ahmad went on to try to make direct political support of Dr Kitchlew itself a test of religious commitment and identity. As another witness declared:

'He [Feroze-ud-Din Ahmad] then said "*Musalmanon Kalma parho aur hath uthao agar tum ne Dr Kitchlew ko vote dena hai.*" ["Muslims, recite the *Kalma* and raise your hand if you must give your vote to Dr Kitchlew."] Many people repeated the *Kalma* in a loud voice, and raised their hands.'

Q. Did he state why he wanted the audience to repeat the *Kalma*? A. Yes, he did. He said that if they went back from their promises, they would be *kafirs* and would not remain Musalmans.

This, the Commission concluded, restricted the ability of voters to cast free ballots in the elections, since it bound voters with an oath

linked to the Quran. But again, as the Commission admitted, the power of the oath came not from Mian Feroze-ud-Din's personal religious prestige, but from its association with the interests of the community as defined by popular feeling among the Muslim people themselves. It drew its power, the Commission admitted, from Mian Feroze-ud-Din Ahmad's references to the Shahidganj firing, about which 'feeling among the rank and file of the Muslim community is undoubtedly very deep.' As the Commission continued: 'An inducement to the audiences at Amritsar to promise that they would vote for Dr Kitchlew, and to support their promises by the oath of the faith which they professed, was, in our opinion, practically irresistible to the majority of those present, when it was prefaced by such references.' The 'undue influence' that was exercised was thus not a product simply of the invocation of the name of God, but of the power of the idea of the community as well—symbolized in this case by Shahidganj—which itself could be used, in a form of 'undue influence', to limit free choice in the electoral arena.²⁹

This suggested also the contradiction in the structure of the electoral system. The British themselves had grounded this system on the concept of community, which was explicitly embodied in separate electorates. But as Muslims had attempted in the public arena to inject into this concept a 'true' ideology of religious community, it had proved incompatible with the legal (and ideological) foundations on which the system was based.

That such contradictions were not a peculiar product of the rhetoric of any particular Muslim party, but of the very attempt to define

²⁹ Report of the Second Election Petitions Commission, Punjab, Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq vs. Dr Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, Amritsar City (Muhammadan) Constituency. *Punjab Gazette*, 18 March 1938, part I, pp. 350–70. Interestingly, the Commission in this case ruled explicitly that spiritual 'undue influence' was not restricted simply to religious leaders, but could be exercised by others as well. In another case involving similar charges in a Sikh constituency, however, an Election Commission ruled in a precisely opposite manner. See Sen and Poddar, *Indian Election Cases*, p. 58. Clearly the degree to which political influence in the community conferred 'spiritual' authority would be a central issue here. But the vagueness in the consideration of this issue, both with respect to the Muslim community and to the Sikh *panth*, suggests the impossible difficulties Election Commissions faced in any technical consideration of this issue under British election law.

‘community’ in the public arena, was indicated by the subsequent byelection to fill Dr Kitchlew’s vacated Amritsar seat. This time the position of the candidates and the parties was exactly reversed. But much the same pattern of rhetorical conflict nevertheless emerged. It was now Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq and his supporters—Unionists and Muslim Leaguers—who were accused of the same sort of ‘corrupt’ electoral practices that had led the previous year to the voiding of the election of Dr Kitchlew. The charge of spiritual ‘undue influence’ hinged this time on the accusation that the agents of Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq had sought to portray the election as one between ‘Islam and *kufar*’ largely because Dr Kitchlew now stood for a body, the Congress, that was ‘outside the pale of Islam’. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was in fact charged in this case with declaring in a speech that he had conferred on Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq the ‘ticket of Islam’:

Islam aur kufar ka muqabila hai, aik taraf islam ka namainda hai, dusri taraf kufron ka. Kiya tum chahte ho keh kufar ke maqabila main Islam ki shikast ho jai. [It is a contest of Islam and *kufar*; on one side is the representative of Islam, on the other side is *kufar*’s. Do you want Islam to be defeated in a contest with *kufar*?]

And this was followed by a similar declaration:

Aik taraf Ab-i-Zamzam hai, aur dusri taraf gai ka peshab. Kiya tum Ab-i-Zamzam ko chhor kar gai ke peshab ki taraf jana chahte ho. Agar nahin to Mohammad Sadiq ko vote do. [On one side is the water of Zamzam and on the other is cow urine. Do you want to leave the water of Zamzam and go toward cow urine? If not, vote for Mohammad Sadiq.]

The rhetoric and its effects were thus much the same as in the previous election. But the Election Commission itself seems to have sensed the contradiction in declaring rhetoric corrupt that gained its power precisely from its success in calling forth a popular sense of Muslim solidarity. Indeed, Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq’s lawyer, Malik Barkat Ali, attempted to point out to the Commission the contradiction in seeking to limit religious rhetoric in a constituency that the British themselves had demarcated on the grounds of separate electorates. Perhaps realizing this, the Election Commission stepped back from

adjudging Maulana Zafar Ali Khan guilty merely on the basis of such rhetoric, stating instead that he had simply 'sailed very near the wind for the commission of this corrupt practice.' Indeed, the Commission stopped short in this case from voiding the election simply on these grounds.³⁰ But as in previously challenged elections, the Commission's discussions illustrated both the prevalence of the rhetoric of opposition between Islam and its enemies in defining the meaning of community within this arena, and the problems this created in applying British electoral rules within the electoral arena. In spite of their own reliance on communities in structuring their rule, the ritual language of community, in fact, continued to prove extraordinarily hard for the British to deal with.

Electoral Arenas and Pakistan

The attempts of Election Tribunals to adjudicate such cases in the late 1930s thus illustrated—in Amritsar and elsewhere—the general tensions ingrained in the entire colonial electoral process. The electoral rules of the British themselves reflected the conception of community that underlay their structuring of the electoral system generally—a system intended to maintain the essential position of the colonial state. The state itself remained ritually aloof from the organization of Indian communities, defining and regulating them through 'objective', administrative criteria. And elections were intended largely to strengthen the ability of the state to control these communities. It was through separate electorates that the state, in a sense, 'captured' the Muslim community. Invocations of 'divine displeasure' in electoral rhetoric were thus barred in the interest not only of maintaining the 'purity' of elections, but also of preventing the

³⁰ Report of the Second Election Petitions Commission, Punjab, Mohammad Zakria Kitchlew vs. Sheikh Mohammad Sadiq, Amritsar City (Muhammadan) Constituency. *Punjab Gazette*, 21 July 1939, part I, pp. 998–1034. Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq's election was, however, voided on other grounds, including his use of Mian Ferozeud-Din Ahmad, who had been disqualified from political activity for six years in the Commission's previous decision, as an election agent. In its third assembly election within a three year period, the constituency finally elected Shaikh Sadiq Hasan, Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq's brother.

private commitment to Islam from intruding into the realm of state authority. But the emergence of elections as popular arenas led to the assertion from below of new forms of community, based on the fusing of personal commitment to Islam with a public assertion of Muslim solidarity. The result was an explosion of communal rhetoric in election contests, particularly in the cities, as Muslim leaders defined new kinds of relationships between themselves and their followers within the structures of political authority that elections created.

Though this created tensions in the operation of British electoral law, it also created severe tensions in the operation of Muslim politics. In spite of the growing importance of election contests in the ritual definition of a new sense of Muslim community, the politics of most Muslim leaders had long been rooted in their claims to represent an ‘objectively’ fixed Muslim community—a community of the sort symbolically defined through separate electorates. The politics of public ritual, however, seemed to challenge the unity of this community. As commitment to public Islamic symbols became the touchstone of community leadership, election contests often divided Muslim leaders. But in the 1940s the concept of Pakistan offered a symbol of Muslim community that seemed to fuse these concepts of community. On one level, the idea of Pakistan derived in a logical progression from the idea of separate electorates. As in the case of separate electorates, the concept of Pakistan implied a formal, objective definition of Muslim community—what Jinnah now referred to as a Muslim ‘nation’. ‘Are not two nations the logical consequence of separate electorates?’ one of Jinnah’s lieutenants declared in explaining the Pakistan concept.³¹ But at the same time, the full identification of this community with the state suggested the collapse of the separation between the state and the communal ritual arena that had long characterized the colonial era. For many, the achievement of Pakistan thus seemed also to be a logical culmination of the ritual politics of Punjab’s electoral arenas. For them, Pakistan represented not just the political realization of an objectively defined Muslim ‘nation’, but also a commitment to a specifically Islamic political order—an order which, unlike that of the British Raj, would link the

³¹ Letter, Chiragh Din, advocate. Gurdaspur, 1 August 1940. Muslim League Papers, Karachi, vol. 207. Lahore Muslim League Session, 1940, vol. 11.

individual realization of an Islamic life with the ritual authority of the state itself.

The fusing of these conceptions of community shaped deeply the 1946 election campaign. The 1946 elections in the Punjab witnessed a surge of communal rhetoric that transcended the boundaries between urban and rural constituencies, and transformed the elections, on a scale never previously witnessed in Punjab, into a ritual of public inclusion in the Muslim community. Supporters of Pakistan—including prominent rural *pirs*—were charged widely in rural and urban constituencies alike with having held out the threat of 'divine displeasure' to induce Muslims to vote for Pakistan. As in many urban elections in the 1930s, the contest was widely portrayed as one between Islam and its enemies, as one between *haq o batil* (right and wrong), between Islam and *kufar*, even though the vote pitted rival Muslim candidates against each other. And the power of this appeal in transforming the very act of voting into a ritual assertion of Islamic incorporation was indicated by the testimony of Muslim voters: 'Wherever I went,' one election agent reported, 'everyone kept saying, bhai if we did not vote for the League we would have become kafir.'³² This, of course, is not to say that such rhetoric influenced all rural elections, for in many areas the power of *biradari* and factional loyalties continued to play an important role. But the pervasiveness of such rhetoric led the Government itself to remind candidates of the rules governing such rhetoric. And when the Government threatened to take action against it, British election rules became themselves the subject of bitter controversy. As Sir Firoz Khan Noon, himself a rural magnate and long-time government supporter, declared, 'it is indeed intolerable that tiny little bureaucrats . . . should now be permitted to decide how far a Muslim speaking to Muslims will be allowed to talk of Islam.'³³ In January 1946, a mass meeting of Muslim religious leaders called on all Muslim leaders to defy the regime's election

³² Report by Ch. Shahwali of Ghumman, Zamindara League worker, Jhelum, 20 February 1946. Unionist Party Papers, Kalra, Sargodha. File D-44.

³³ *Dawn*, 23 January 1946.

rules.³⁴ Defiance of such electoral rules became in fact a general rallying cry.

But if open defiance of the election rules of the Raj characterized much of the electoral rhetoric of 1946, this did not suggest an end to tensions in the election process. In the aftermath of the elections, defeated candidates Filed an unprecedented number of election petitions, the majority of them charging some form of spiritual ‘undue influence’. Few of these cases ultimately proved successful before Election Tribunals, partly because many did not reach decisions before partition, and partly because, even in those that did, Election Commissions were apparently wary of voiding elections for practices that were committed on such a broad scale. But although few elections were overturned, this did not signify, in the end, a retreat from the basic principles on which the British colonial electoral system had been based. Jinnah’s own statements at the time of partition suggested his own commitment, not to ‘parliamentary democracy’ per se, ‘but to the existing structure of state authority.’ Elections and ‘representative’ government were critical for Jinnah in legitimizing the position of the Pakistan state as an embodiment of the ‘nation’. But the ‘nation’ was, in his rhetoric, a pre-existing entity—not a community to be created through the electoral process. It was for this reason that Jinnah saw little necessity to link the constitutional order of the new state to the public ritual of Islam. The identity of the ‘nation’ was defined by Pakistan itself—the ultimate separate electorate—and elections were to serve as a process controlling and directing the competition of *biradari*, faction and class within this symbolically defined community.

But for this very reason, the place of elections in the shaping of Pakistani national identity has continued to be an ambiguous one. Little work has in fact been done on the role of elections in Pakistan as ‘national’ rituals, partly because Pakistan’s elections since 1947 have been so few and so traumatic. But tension in the politics of ‘representation’ has been clear in Pakistan almost from the time of its creation. Popular disillusionment with a system whose ‘representative’ leaders were tied to local political bases and to factional and *biradari* constituencies was evident in the 1950s, and helped to lay

³⁴ See the account of the Lahore mass meeting of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam in *The Eastern Times*, 27 January 1946.

the groundwork for the coming of martial law. In fact, the crisis precipitated by the anti-Ahmadi riots of 1953 dramatized clearly the same kind of tension that had marked many pre-partition elections. The fact that politics since Pakistan's creation—as under separate electorates—had become an essentially all-Muslim affair, did not prevent a large number of Muslims from seeking to dramatize publicly a different conception of Muslim community by defining a category of enemies (or *kafirs*) within, in the fight against whom 'true' members of the community had to commit themselves actively. This was a community defined by the public commitment of individual Muslims, for whom the symbolism of the Pakistan state was not enough. That the outbreak of anti-Ahmadi riots fed on other political rivalries in Punjabi politics is well known, but the power of the anti-Ahmadi issue to call into question the very foundations of Pakistan reflected the tensions in the relationship between the state and the people, that the creation of Pakistan had produced. The significance of elections in defining this relationship—and in defining the nature of the Pakistani political 'community'—remains a central issue for Pakistan even today.

Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab

The emergence of the Muslim state of Pakistan in 1947 marked a watershed in the religious as well as the political development of Indian Muslims. But surprisingly little has been written on the widespread religious backing for Pakistan in the mid-1940s, backing which made the Muslim League, as Peter Hardy puts it, ‘a chiliastic movement rather than a pragmatic political party.’¹ This chapter will examine the nature of Muslim religious leadership before 1947 in the Punjab focusing particularly on the place of Sufis and sufi shrines in the coming of Pakistan. The long-term narrative of the place of Sufis in Punjab’s politics provides, in fact, a framework for tracking the complex tensions that led to the emergence of Pakistan, for sufi shrines had traditionally occupied a place at the hinge between Islam’s civilizational imaginings and the local political worlds within which Punjabis lived. Their longterm story thus provides a vital perspective for understanding the intersection between old structures of popular Islamic thinking in the Punjab, the province Jinnah called the ‘cornerstone of Pakistan,’² and the new visions of civilization modernity brought by colonialism— and elections—in the 20th century.

The Development of Muslim Religious Leadership

In terms of religious leadership, rural Punjab was dominated in the colonial period by a class of hereditary, and often landed, sufi *pirs*.

¹ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 239.

² *The Tribune* (Lahore), 23 April 1943.

These were *sajjada nishins* whose *gaddis* were the shrines/tombs of the dead sufi saints whose spiritual power was thought to be responsible for the conversion of Punjab to Islam. This form of religious leadership had historically facilitated a close relationship between religious and political authority. Shrines were the centers of the *barakat* (religious charisma) of the dead sufis, which they were thought to have transmitted both to their tombs and to their descendants. The diffusion of shrines as local centers of religious authority produced a structure of religious leadership which mirrored the structure of political authority in much of western Punjab, where power was also diffused to a large extent among numerous petty tribal chiefs.³ The *sajjada nishins* of the shrines were, in fact, in many cases closely associated with these local leaders.⁴ More importantly, the relations of the *sajjada nishins* with the Muslim state followed much the same pattern as the relations of these local chiefs with the state. The base of their religious authority in heredity rather than in piety made *sajjada nishins*, like tribal chiefs and other local leaders, readily susceptible to the common forms of state political control through the granting of honors, appointments and lands.⁵ Rulers patronized building at the shrines. During Mughal times, the state thus established close ties with many of the important *sajjada nishins*; in one case at Multan the Mughals even relied on a family of *sajjada nishins* to serve

³ The Ajmer Enquiry Committee suggested that the diffusion of shrines as centers of hereditary religious leadership 'presumably . . . received impetus from the feudal organization . . .' which was developing in India. *Report of the Dargah Khwaja Saheb (Ajmer) Committee of Enquiry*, p. 29.

⁴ Though there is not much evidence of this, such connections were apparently established from the time of the conversion when it was generally not by popular preaching, but by contacts between the sufis and the local chiefs that much of the conversion was accomplished. This, at least, is the tradition of conversion of a number of the tribes. H. A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1970), vol. 2, p. 412; vol. 3, pp. 417–18.

⁵ A detailed example of how such a relationship developed in the medieval Deccan sultanate of Bijapur is given in Richard Eaton, 'The Court and the Dargah in the Seventeenth Century Deccan,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1973), pp. 50–54.

as their local Governors.⁶ Such connections with the Muslim state added an important political dimension to the authority of many of the *sajjada nishins*, which increased their prestige and gave official recognition to their religious authority. By the end of the Mughal period, therefore, the religious influence of many of the *sajjada nishins* as custodians of the local outposts of Islam had become closely associated with their political influence as local outposts of the Muslim state.

Because of the pervasive development of such political connections during Mughal times, however, the decline of Mughal authority in Punjab had a substantial impact on this shrine-based system of religious authority—an impact that was ultimately to shape its role in the Pakistan movement. Much has been written on the importance of the decline of the Mughal state for the religious development of Indian Muslims, but most of this has focused on the role of Shah Waliullah and his followers at Delhi in trying to reformulate Islam in order to compensate for the loss of state support for their religion. The decline of the Muslim state had a direct effect on the predominant system of religious leadership in the Punjab, however. As the links between the shrines and the Mughal state were snapped with the collapse of central Muslim political authority, many of the old *sajjada nishins* who had wielded local political authority under the Mughals were transformed into petty local chieftains, who were increasingly isolated from any connection with a larger Islamic polity.⁷ In response to this isolation, a movement developed in the 18th and 19th centuries to infuse new religious awareness into the existing forms of religious influence connected with the shrines to compensate for the collapse of the links between the local shrines and the state. This movement was embodied in a dramatic revival of the Chishti order which, perhaps because of its stronger traditions of independence from state authority, had gone into

⁶ The family is the Gilani Sayyids, *sajjada nishins* of the shrine of Musa Pak Shaheed. Lepel Griffin and C.F. Massey, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1910), vol. 2, p. 324.

⁷ A good example of this is the *sajjada nishin* of the shrine of Baba Farid at Pakpattan. He asserted his independence of imperial control in the mid-eighteenth century and fought with other local chiefs. *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 1933, p. 38. A similar pattern was followed by many of the Bokhari Sayyid *sajjada nishins*. *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, pp. 58–60.

eclipse in Punjab during the years of Mughal dominance. The impulse for this revival came originally from Delhi, where the decline of the Mughals was most immediately felt, and was reflected in the work of Shah Kalimullah (1650–1729) and later Shah Fakhruddin (1717–85) who sought to revitalize the Chishti order and impart to it a new spiritual intensity.⁸ The Chishti revival in the Punjab can be traced most directly, however, from Shah Fakhruddin's most important disciple, Khwaja Nur Muhammad Maharvi, who established a *khanqah* near Bahawalpur in the mid-18th century. Khwaja Nur Muhammad has been credited with having 'fostered the growth of the (Chishti) silsilah to such an extent that other mystic fraternities seem to have been totally eclipsed.'⁹ He attracted a widespread following among all classes of the population by emphasizing the mission of the Chishtis to revitalize Islam and by teaching the importance of personal adherence to the *shariat*.¹⁰ His influence was spread by a large number of *khalifas* who carried the mission of the Chishtis all across western Punjab. These *khalifas* themselves started *khanqahs* which later became the centers of shrines, and their *khalifas* in turn spread the revival still further.¹¹ The vitality of the Chishti revival continued well into the period of British rule in the Punjab and led eventually to a network of extremely influential Chishti shrines in rural west Punjab. These new Chishti shrines did not completely supplant the older shrines, many of which continued to exercise considerable influence, but the most important shrines of the Chishti revival—at Taunsa in Dera Ghazi Khan District, Sial Sharif in Shahpur District, Jalalpur in

⁸ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht* (Karachi: Maktaba-yi Arifin, 1975), pp. 366–426, 460–529.

⁹ M. Zameeruddin Siddiqi, 'The Resurgence of the Chishti Silsilah in the Punjab During the Eighteenth Century,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1970* (New Delhi: Indian History Congress, 1971), p. 408.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

¹¹ In the major line of Chishti revival *pirs* who were spiritually descended from Khwaja Nur Muhammad, Khwaja Nur Muhammad himself had 30 *khalifas*, Shah Suleman of Taunsa had 63 *khalifas*, and Khwaja Shamsuddin Sialvi had 35. K.A. Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht*, pp. 555–56, 664–65, 706–8.

Jhelum District, and Golra in Rawalpindi District—became major new centers of religious authority.¹²

The importance of the Chishti revival in the development of Muslim religious leadership was that it brought a greater emphasis on the definition of Muslim identity according to the *shariat* to the appeal of Muslim religious leaders in western Punjab, without at the same time challenging the forms of religious influence based on the shrines. Here it is most illuminating to contrast this revival with the religious reforms which grew out of the work of Shah Waliullah. Both Shah Waliullah and the Chishti revivalists were responding to the problems of providing religious leadership without the aid of a Muslim state, but whereas those who drew on the tradition of Shah Waliullah sought to do this by seeking ultimately to develop new forms of organization to produce an independent class of ulama which could set religious standards for the community, the Chishti revivalists sought to do it within the traditional forms of religious authority already popular in western Punjab. They continued to emphasize the *khanqahs* and shrines as local religious centers, and they relied on the traditional forms of influence, the *piri-muridi* tie and the *urs*. This continued organizational emphasis reflected the continued political structure of rural Punjab society, where power was diffused among a large number of rural, often tribally based leaders. The new Chishti *pirs* did not have the local political power of many of the older *pirs* who had politically served the Mughal state, but they were equally tied to local structures of rural authority, for their religious influence was often directed at the local political leaders upon whom they were frequently dependent for economic support.¹³ In contrast to this, the reforms following on the work of Shah Waliullah were a product of the heartland of Muslim empire, where power had been concentrated in the central state and not diffused among numerous intermediaries to the same extent as in Punjab. In such circumstances, with the collapse of the Muslim state, Muslim religious leaders had been compelled to depend to a greater

¹² Short biographies of the saints who founded these *khanqahs* are given by Nizami. There is a full biography of Pir Mehr Ali Shah of Golra; Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mihr-i Munir* (Golra: Sayyid Ghulam Mohyuddin, 1973?).

¹³ Siddiqi, 'The Resurgence of Chishti Silsilah,' p. 409; Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mihr-i Munir*, pp. 297–98.

degree on their own independent resources, and this may explain their greater concern with developing new forms of organization.

The contrast between these two traditions of religious leadership is of great importance in understanding the subsequent evolution of religious authority in the Punjab. The reformist tradition of Shah Waliullah produced eventually a recognizable class of ulama,¹⁴ whose organization was increasingly defined in the late 19th century by the polemical defence of Islam from Hindu and Christian attacks and by the development of religious schools. In the Punjab, the most active of reformist religious leaders were the ulama of the Ahl-i Hadis, whose tradition was drawn particularly from Shah Waliullah's emphasis on the study of the original Quran and *hadis* over the subsequent interpretations of the medieval schools of law.¹⁵ In addition, ulama of Deoband, the premier religious school associated with the reformist movement, exerted an increasing influence in Punjab in the late 19th century, particularly in the cities and towns.¹⁶ Though the Ahl-i Hadis and the Deobandis differed in many important respects, they were alike in their rejection of the common forms of religious influence centered on the shrines. The Ahl-i Hadis were the most categorical in their rejection of the forms of Islam based on the sufi orders, but the leaders of Deoband, though usually initiated in the sufi orders and familiar with sufi practices, also rejected most of the organizational forms which had come to dominate popular religion in the Punjab. They did not approve, for example, of the centrality of the worship at tombs in religious organization, nor did they believe in the *urs*.¹⁷

In response to such attacks, another distinct perspective developed among those ulama who approved of the forms of popular Islam. This group of ulama, which generally crystallized under the name Ahl-i

¹⁴ W.C. Smith, 'The "Ulama" in Indian Politics,' in C.H. Philips, ed., *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp. 50–51.

¹⁵ Barbara Metcalf, 'The Reformist Ulama: Muslim Religious Leadership in India, 1860–1900' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1974), pp. 304–9.

¹⁶ Metcalf notes that the great bulk of early monetary contributions to the school at Deoband from the Punjab came from donors in the cities and towns; *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Sunnat o Jamaat, defended the combination of religious awareness and popular leadership at the shrines which had characterized the Chishti revival. Ironically, in defending the traditional forms of religious organization, these ulama also turned to the newer reformist organizational forms. This was evident in the founding in 1887 of the Dar-al-ulum Naumania at Lahore, which served as a focus of Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat influence,¹⁸ and later in the founding in the 1920s of another religious school at Lahore, the Dar-al ulum Hizb-ul-Ahnaf, which tied the development of the Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat perspective to a similar perspective being developed by Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi in the United Provinces.¹⁹ In spite of the founding of these urban religious schools, however, the distinctive significance of this group of ulama lay in its ties to the rural religious leaders associated with the shrines, ties which the predominantly urban-based reformist ulama could not match. Several of the Chishti revivalists, such as Pir Mehr Ali Shah, *sajjada nishin* of Golra, took a close interest in the Dar-al ulum Naumania,²⁰ and other rural *pirs* in the revivalist tradition, most notably Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, an influential Naqshbandi *sajjada nishin* from Alipur Sayyedan in Sialkot District, had close connections with the Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat ulama.²¹ The significance of the Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat perspective was, in fact, that it legitimized the traditional forms of religious leadership associated with the shrines according to the standards of religious education and debate developed by the reformers.

By the 20th century, therefore, though the traditional forms of rural religious leadership associated with the shrines had been strongly

¹⁸ Hafiz Nazar Ahmad, *Jaiza-yi Madaris-i Arabiya-yi Maghribi Pakistan, II* (Lahore: Muslim Academy, 1972), pp. 28–29; Iqbal Ahmad Faruqi, *Tazkira-yi Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat Lahaur* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabviya, 1975), p. 263; *Naqoosh*, Lahore Number (February 1962), p. 538.

¹⁹ Hafiz Nazar Ahmad, *Jaiza*, pp. 27–28; Faruqi, *Tazkira*, p. 321.

²⁰ Mohammad Din Kalim, *Lahore ke Auliya-yi Chisht* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabviya, 1967), pp. 143–44.

²¹ Pir Jamaat Ali Shah was a Naqshbandi, but I have treated him as a revivalist since his religious concerns were very similar to those of the Chishti revival *sajjada nishins*. He made donations to both the Dar-al ulum Naumania and the Dar-al ulum Hizbal Ahnaf. Haider Husain Shah, *Shah-i Jamaat* (Lahore: Maktaba Shah-i Jamaat, 1973), p. 116.

challenged, the challenge had not gone unanswered. The structure of religious authority based on the shrines remained overwhelmingly dominant in rural Punjab, and the fundamental basis of religious leadership in the rural areas remained tied to the hereditary transmission of religious charisma. The focus of religious authority continued to be diffused among numerous shrines which were, in many ways, tied closely to the local political structures of rural society. But the currents of religious revival had produced a deep impact on the concerns of many of the *sajjada nishins* whose roots were in the Chishti revival. It was these revivalist leaders, who were a product of the era of religious ferment which had produced the reformist perspectives, and yet who were, at the same time, closely linked as rural *sajjada nishins* to the local structures of Muslim power which had survived the Mughal collapse, who were to play a pivotal role in the developing relationship between religious leaders and Muslim politics.

Religious Leaders and the Unionist Party

The impact of the structural position of *sajjada nishins* on their political roles cannot be understood without describing briefly the structure of rural politics which grew out of the system of administration developed by the British in rural Punjab. In the 19th century the British had attempted to consolidate a system of rural administration which relied, particularly in west Punjab, on the local political influence of landed, often tribally based, intermediaries. In this the British were not departing from the established traditions of political control in west Punjab. But at the same time the British sought to bolster the position of these rural leaders by isolating the rural areas from the growing economic and political influences emanating from the cities which might have tended to undermine the position of these leaders. This policy found its fullest expression in the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 which, stated in general terms, barred the non-agricultural population from acquiring land in rural areas.²² From these roots a political tradition developed which

²² For a detailed account of the background to the development of the administrative tradition which produced the Land Alienation Act, see P.H.N.

emphasized both the unity of interests of the agricultural classes in opposition to the urban population and the continuing leadership of the agricultural classes by these landed intermediaries. It was this tradition which eventually produced the Unionist Party in the 1920s, a provincial party based on a pro-rural agriculturalist ideology and led by the landed leaders of rural society, which dominated Punjab politics for almost a quarter of a century before 1947.

The political role of *sajjada nishins* in Punjab politics during this period must be seen in relation to the Unionist Party and the British administrative policies which had helped to produce it. Many of the *sajjada nishins*, particularly those associated with the older pre-Mughal shrines, were very strongly tied into these same rural administrative structures which lay behind the development of the Unionists. The political role of many of these shrines in pre-British times has already been indicated; after the fall of the Mughals, many *sajjada nishins* established themselves as powerful local political figures. After the annexation of the Punjab the British soon discovered that in developing their own rural administration they could not ignore the political influence in the rural areas that many of these *sajjada nishins* had acquired. Many *sajjada nishins* were accordingly honored by the British and given positions of local administrative authority. This was particularly true in southwest Punjab, where families of *sajjada nishins* were among the largest landholders in the area and were extremely influential in local affairs. In Montgomery District, for example, the British recognized the *sajjada nishin* of the shrine of Baba Farid Shakarganj at Pakpattan as one of the leading darbaris in the district.²³ In Jhang, Muzaffargarh and Multan Districts *sajjada nishins* played leading roles as *zaildars*, honorary magistrates and district board members.²⁴

In the 20th century, as the British attempted to give political cohesion to a class of landed rural intermediaries who could be counted on to support their Government, they recognized the leading *sajjada nishins* as an important part of this class. This was also

van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972).

²³ *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 1933, pp. 108–9.

²⁴ *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, pp. 58–60; *Muzaffargarh District Gazetteer*, 1929, pp. 75–77; *Multan District Gazetteer*, 1923–24, pp. 106–10.

the time when in nearly all the western Punjab districts *sajjada nishins* were recognized as belonging to the agricultural classes receiving protection under the Alienation of Land Act of 1900. The lands of these Muslim religious leaders, one British officer noted, required protection under the Act 'for political reasons' as much as those of any other group.²⁵ Later, when the British consciously sought to define a class of 'landed gentry' by distributing canal colony land grants, many of the leading *sajjada nishins* were explicitly recognized as members of the 'landed gentry' class. The inclusion of these religious leaders among the 'landed gentry' was at first questioned by some; H.J. Maynard, for example, pointed out in the case of the Pir of Makhad of Attock District that 'it would be a straining of language to call the *pir* one of the hereditary landed gentry of the province.' But the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, answered that whether truly 'landed gentry' or not, the influence of such religious heads could not be ignored. The Pir of Makhad, he pointed out, was 'regarded with veneration by many of the leading Frontier and western Punjab chiefs,' and such influence had to be taken into account. The same could be said of other *sajjada nishins* whose hereditary religious influence might be put to political purposes. 'If a man has political influence and uses it well,' O'Dwyer argued, 'the fact that he is connected with a religious institution and even to a certain extent derives his influence from that connection should not in my opinion stand in the way of obtaining a grant.' Subsequently many *sajjada nishins* were recognized as 'landed gentry', particularly in southwest Punjab, where in several districts, religious families composed over a third of all those receiving 'landed gentry' grants.²⁶

²⁵ Under the Land Alienation Act *sajjada nishins* were not specifically recognized as agriculturalists, but Sayyids and Qureshis, the 'tribes' to which most *sajjada nishins* belonged, were recognized as 'agricultural tribes' in most districts. The position of Muslim religious leaders as agriculturalist was, however, specifically discussed in the correspondence accompanying passage of the Act. Note by J. Wilson, Punjab Settlement Commissioner, 1 February 1901. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 442/ 1/00/4.

²⁶ The case of the Pir of Makhad was debated in 1914. The case is in Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/3/00/164A. Lists by district of those eventually receiving 'landed gentry' grants are in Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/1176.

It was this recognition as landed rural leaders which provided the basis for the support of many of these *sajjada nishins* for the Unionist Party. The common political interests of *sajjada nishins* and the landed class which dominated western Punjab had been well established by the British by the time that Sir Fazli Husain began to try to organize a rural party in the Punjab Legislative Council in the early 1920s. Of the 27 members initially returned to the Council in 1920 for rural Muslim seats, five were from influential families of *pirs*,²⁷ and all of them seem to have been Fazli Husain's supporters. Fazli Husain made no special appeal to these *sajjada nishins* to join the Unionist Party when it was founded in 1923, but it was hardly necessary to approach them as a special interest, for their interests, like those of other hereditary rural leaders, were largely defined by their roles as intermediaries in the rural administration and by their support of the Land Alienation Act. The religious concerns of most of these landed *pirs* seem to have been satisfied by the Unionist policy of seeking the advancement of Muslims through the reservation of places for Muslims in schools and in the Government services, and by the protection of the economic interests of the rural Muslims from the assault of the Hindu moneylender. For them it does not seem to have been important that the Party failed to define specifically Muslim interests according to a religious standard.²⁸

Such a position, however, was not particularly calculated to win the support of those *sajjada nishins* who were a product of the 18th and 19th-century religious revival in rural Punjab. The Chishti *pirs* in particular did not share the tradition of cooperation with the British administration, and their religious concerns extended well beyond the issue of the economic advance of the rural Muslims which dominated Unionist policy. As products of the religious revival, they were

²⁷ Great Britain, *Return Showing the Results of Elections in India*, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXVI (1921), p. 18.

²⁸ A good example of this attitude is provided by Pir Mohammad Husain, *sajjada nishin* of Shergarh, who was one of the leading spokesmen for the Unionist position in the Punjab Council during the 1920s. His view of the communal problem showed no sign of a distinctive religious perspective; 'the root cause of all the Hindu-Mohammadan disunion in the Province,' he said, 'is the indebtedness of the masses' *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, vol. VI, 1924, p. 229.

concerned with the religious identity of Muslims and with the spreading of a greater awareness of Islam. But significantly, despite these religious concerns, the revivalist *sajjada nishins* did not define politically a set of religious interests independent of the Unionist position. There are two reasons for this, both of which reflect the fact that the revival shrines, like the older shrines, were an integral part of the rural social and political milieu. First, the revivalist *sajjada nishins*, equally with the landed *sajjada nishins*, relied for their religious following, and usually for financial support as well, on the leaders of rural society, who were overwhelmingly Unionist supporters. A *pir* like Sayyid Mehr Ali Shah of Golra, for example, though he shunned association with the Government, nevertheless had intimate religious ties with many of the staunchest pro-Government and pro-Unionist Muslims,²⁹ and this prevented him from actively opposing the Unionist Party. Second, the political alternative for the revivalist *sajjada nishins* was alliance with urban politicians who opposed the pro-rural Unionist policy, and though such an alliance would have provided a platform for religious criticism of the Unionists, it also would have put them in the same camp as the urban reformist ulama, whose attack covered the whole structure of rural religion. In such circumstances, the revivalist *sajjada nishins*, though often unhappy with the religious position of the Unionists, were unlikely to join in a concerted attack which threatened their own religious position in rural society.

The importance of the first of these considerations can be readily demonstrated by an example from one of the leading Chishti revival shrines. One of the most striking cases showing the importance of local ties in affecting the political outlook of the revivalist *sajjada nishins* is provided by the case of the shrine at Jalalpur in Jhelum District. In that case the *sajjada nishin*, Pir Fazl Shah, seems to have made a concerted effort to maintain the political independence of the shrine in order to press the religious concerns which lay behind the Chishti revival, but despite his efforts he was drawn into the local political factions which lay behind Unionist power. What cemented the ties of the Jalalpur shrine into local political rivalries were marriage connections with locally influential landed families. Pir Fazl Shah's mother was the daughter of one of the leading Rajput chiefs of

²⁹ Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mihr-i Munir*, pp. 297–98.

the district, and his maternal uncle, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, was an ambitious local politico who was later to become important in Punjab provincial politics.³⁰ During the 1920s Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan worked 'hand in glove' with Nawab Mehr Shah, the younger brother of the *sajjada nishin*, in order to build a faction in Jhelum politics.³¹ Despite such efforts to tie the shrine into local factional politics, however, Pir Fazl Shah made an effort to maintain the political independence of the shrine by organizing his religious followers in 1927 into an entity known as the Hizbullah, or 'party of God'. Annual meetings of the Hizbullah coincided with the yearly *urs*, and resolutions were passed on a number of religious and political subjects, thus providing the Pir with a platform for the political expression of an independent religious view.³² But in spite of the opportunity this provided the Pir for independent religious rhetoric, the strength of his ties to the faction of his uncle and brother seriously undermined his independence when it came to political organizing. The Hizbullah organization carried significant political weight in Jhelum and western Gujrat Districts, but at election time in 1937 Fazl Shah threw its strength not behind an independent religious candidate, but behind his uncle, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan.³³ Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who had responded sympathetically to many of the Pir's earlier appeals from the Hizbullah platform, initially stayed aloof from the Unionist Party and ran on the ticket of the Muslim League, a primarily urban party at this time which provided him with an independent platform in Jhelum. Almost immediately after being elected, however, he accepted the offer of a Parliamentary Secretaryship from Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Unionist Premier, and he became a strong backer of the Unionist Party in the Assembly. The Pir's ability to maintain an independent religious critique of the Unionists was badly compromised, and this was indicated when the Unionists responded to criticism from the Pir by simply asking Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan to

³⁰ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah* (Jalalpur Sharif: Idara Hizbullah, 1965), pp. 520–24.

³¹ Letter, W.R. Wilson (DC Jhelum), to Calvert, 28 August 1926. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/3/C9/186 KW(19).

³² Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, pp. 337–87.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 355–56.

keep the Pir in line.³⁴ The case of Pir Fazl Shah thus demonstrates the difficulty for the Chishti revivalists, despite their religious concerns, in escaping politically from the pressures of the rural social and political milieu of which they were a part.

The strength of the ties of these *sajjada nishins* with the rural political scene is even more clearly indicated when their position is contrasted with that of the reformist ulama of the towns. While rural *sajjada nishins*, even revivalist *sajjada nishins* like Pir Fazl Shah, maintained close ties with political leaders in rural Punjab, the political strength of the reformist ulama came from their very independence of such political ties. The thrust of their reforms, particularly the founding of the Dar-al ulum at Deoband, had been to provide an organizational structure for Islam in India which did not rely on traditional Muslim political power, either through the state or in the localities. For this reason, in their early development they had been largely apolitical,³⁵ but when they did enter politics after the First World War they did so with a new and independent political approach, which offered a religious critique of traditional Muslim politics. Unlike the rural *sajjada nishins*, therefore, many Deobandi ulama were prominent in the formation of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, the first independent organization of Muslim religious leaders in India, and through this organization many of the Deobandis began to play an active role in politics in opposition to the British administration and to the Muslim leaders whose power was tied to the administration.³⁶ This independent political role was demonstrated first during the Khilafat movement, when many of the most active reformist ulama supported the Congress non-cooperation program.³⁷ Later it was many of these

³⁴ Note by Syed Afzal Ali Hasnie, Resident Secretary, Unionist Party to Sir Sikander, 2 February 1939, and draft letter to Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, n.d. Unionist Party Papers, File G-21. I would like to thank Nazar Hyat Khan Tiwana of Chicago for permission to use these papers.

³⁵ Barbara Metcalf, 'The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India,' in *Berkeley Working Papers on South and Southeast Asia*, vol. I (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 1977), p. 266.

³⁶ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, pp. 189–95.

³⁷ The Chairman of the Punjab Khilafat Committee was Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri of the Ahl-i Hadis. Other prominent religious reformists in the movement included Maulana Daud Ghaznavi of the Ahl-i Hadis and Maulana

same men who formed the backbone of the Ahrar Party, which was founded in 1929 in opposition to the politics of the dominant rural Muslims in Punjab.³⁸ It was the Ahrar who offered the most coherent political challenge to the Unionists on religious grounds. But the Ahrar, having emerged to a large extent out of the religious concerns of the reformist perspective, were largely cut off from the politics and the religion of the rural areas. Though by no means exclusively a party of the reformist ulama, the Ahrar were, like the reformists, primarily urban in composition and represented socially the urban lower and middle class.³⁹ Their appeal represented not only a plea for heightened religious awareness, which did attract some of the rural revivalist *sajjada nishins*, but also an attack on the leaders of rural society, which alienated the support of these *sajjada nishins*. Despite a common concern with infusing Muslim politics with greater religious awareness, therefore, the revivalist *sajjada nishins* and the reformist ulama were generally unable to unite politically.

To a certain extent the differences between the reformists and the rural revivalists can be traced to theological differences which were a product of the increasing definition of opposing religious perspectives during the late 19th century. Theological controversies in fact flared with considerable frequency in the early 20th century, particularly between the Ahl-i Hadis and their supporters and the *pirs*. One such controversy, for example, saw Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur defending the *pirs* and sufis of the Punjab in 1917 against the attacks of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan.⁴⁰ Such differences in religious outlook were, however, even in the 1920s and 1930s not so strongly defined as to prevent in themselves cooperation among religious leaders of different perspectives on a common Muslim issue. Rather, theological controversies gave a cutting edge to the different political alliances of

Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianvi of the Deobandis. For a list of local Khilafat Committee members, see M. Shaukat Ali Khan, *Punjab Men Tahrik-i Khilafat* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Punjab University, Lahore), pp. 134–38.

³⁸ W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), pp. 270–72. Smith gives the date of the founding of the Ahrar as 1930, but most other sources give the year as 1929.

³⁹ Y.B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (New Delhi: Trimurti Publications, 1972), p. 110.

⁴⁰ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, pp. 224–25.

these groups based on their social position in the urban or rural areas. During the Khilafat movement, for example, there were several *sajjada nishins* who did support the movement to varying degrees, but they were generally unwilling to cooperate with the Congress and the Hindus in the more radical phase of the movement largely because in the Punjab, at least, the movement was as much anti-British and anti-rural party as it was pro-Khilafat.⁴¹ The controversy which flared about the role of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in the Khilafat movement indicated this clearly, for despite his having collected funds for the Khilafat Committee and having spoken in favour of the Khilafat cause, he was later criticized by the *Hamdard* of Mauland Muhammad Ali and the *Zamindar* of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan for having been pro-British, an attack which focused not simply on Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, but on the sufis in general.⁴² Though Pir Jamaat Ali Shah strongly defended his record, such an attack can be seen in many ways as a general attack, not on his record, but on the social connections of such religious leaders and on their ties with the colonial power structure.

The same tension can be seen during the 1930s. The emergence of the Ahrar Party as a popular expression of religious awareness was heralded by the Kashmir agitation of 1931 and 1932. The leadership of this agitation was provided primarily by the same Muslims who had been most active in the Khilafat cause. Politically, as the British assessed it, the Ahrar movement represented 'in the main the urban Muslims, who are jealous of the ascendancy of wealthy landowners in the Legislature and Executive.'⁴³ But as a religious agitation, and one which combined the assertion of the Muslim right to practise their religion in Kashmir with an assertion of Islamic orthodoxy in attacks

⁴¹ Pir Fazl Shah, for example, helped to organize some *sajjada nishins* at the Pakpattan *urs* to send a pro-Khilafat telegram to the Viceroy, but he opposed boycott of schools, the police and the army as harmful to Muslims; *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 262. Of the major *sajjada nishins* in Punjab only the Pir of Sial seems to have actively supported the non-cooperation phase of the movement.

⁴² Maulana Maulvi Mohammad Abul Majid Khan Qasuri, *Pir Sayyid Mohammad Jamaat Ali Shah . . . ke Mukhtasar Qaumi Karname* (Agra: Agra Akhbar Press, 1925), pp. 1–2. This pamphlet, which was written to defend Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, describes the controversy.

⁴³ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1931. National Archives of India (NAI), Home Political, File 18/11/31.

on the role of Qadianis in the All-India Kashmir Committee, the Kashmir movement attracted support well beyond the social class of the Ahrar leaders who were directing it. As the agitation expanded in late 1931, even 'the Pirs,' the Chief Secretary wrote, 'have begun to take a hand and declare the efforts of the Ahrars to be activated by the right spirit of Islamic sympathy . . .'⁴⁴ Pir Fazl Shah praised the spirit of the common Muslims during the Kashmir agitation as indicative of their willingness to sacrifice for Islam,⁴⁵ and Pir Jamaat Ali Shah donated 500 rupees to the cause.⁴⁶ But when it became necessary to define the political aims of the Kashmir movement, the differing perspectives of the groups became clear. The Ahrar leaders leaned toward the Congress as the center of anti-British sentiment and the chief organizational alternative to the landowning class represented by the Unionists in the Punjab, and eventually they tried to turn the movement toward more openly pro-Congress and anti-Government aims.⁴⁷ As long as the movement had been religious in character and directed against the Hindu ruler of Kashmir, its support had been broad-based, but this pro-Congress move alienated much of the purely religious sympathy the Ahrar had gained and prevented it from incorporating many of the rural religious leaders into the organization as a united religious front. Even though the Ahrar later tried to play down its connections with the Congress, as far as the Kashmir agitation was concerned the damage had been done and the movement had lost much of its popular support.⁴⁸ The Ahrar remained, in fact, up until partition, essentially an urban movement.

The conflicting claims on the allegiance of the revivalist *sajjada nishins* in the political climate of the 1930s—claims of their own religious urges on one side and of their social position in the rural areas on the other—were nowhere more graphically dramatized than in the Shahidganj agitation of 1935 and 1936 (see chapter 6). The

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, p. 349.

⁴⁶ Akhtar Husain Shah, *Sirat-i Amir-i Millat* (Alipur Sayyedan: published by the author, 1974), pp. 403–4.

⁴⁷ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the second half of February 1932. NAI, Home Political, File 18/4/32.

⁴⁸ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of March 1932. NAI, Home Political, File 18/5/32.

agitation over the Shahidganj Mosque in Lahore, which began after the Sikhs demolished the mosque in July 1935, produced the largest response from the *sajjada nishins* of Punjab of any religious cause before the movement for Pakistan. The *sajjada nishins* supported the agitation as a purely religious cause, which was on this occasion in no way compromised by the political leanings of the Ahrar, who were more concerned at the time about maneuvering for the upcoming provincial elections. The initial leadership of the agitation in Lahore came instead from the Majlis Ittihad-i Millat led by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. After many of the leaders of this group were externed from Lahore, however, an attempt was made to give the *sajjada nishins* leadership in the agitation. At a special Shahidganj conference in Rawalpindi in September 1935, the Shahidganj agitators turned to Pir Jamaat Ali Shah to lead the movement and appointed him Amir-i Millat ('leader of the community'), at the same time inviting 'all Pirs and other religious leaders to openly identify themselves with the struggle . . .'.⁴⁹ This was an attempt, with the agitation otherwise stalled, to tap the thousands of religious followers of these *pirs* in the rural areas; the hope was, as one newspaper later put it, that 'simultaneously with the appointment of the Pir as the Amir his followers would enlist as volunteers.'⁵⁰ Some hoped that by naming Pir Jamaat Ali Shah to head the agitation they might even be able to embarrass the Government by enlisting the thousands of followers of the Pir who were serving in the army.⁵¹

Assuming the leadership of such an agitation, however, put a rural *sajjada nishin* like Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in a very difficult position. Though other *pirs*, including Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur, Pir Qamaruddin of Sial Sharif, and Pir Ghulam Mohyuddin, the son of Pir Mehr Ali Shah of Golra, offered support for the agitation,⁵² Pir Jamaat Ali Shah wavered in trying to chalk out a programme. At the Rawalpindi conference he had apparently joined in the general call for

⁴⁹ CID Report of the Rawalpindi Conference, 3 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁵⁰ *Inqilab* (Lahore), January 15, 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

⁵¹ CID Report of the Rawalpindi Conference, 3 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁵² Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, p. 351.

starting civil disobedience in order to regain the site of the mosque, but with his many connections to wealthy pro-Government Muslims he could not take too strong an anti-Government stand. As the Chief Secretary wrote immediately after the conference, 'Deeply as he may have appeared to have committed himself, there is some reason to think that he is not altogether comfortable about his position, and he may retreat from it. Influences are being brought to bear to this end.'⁵³ After conferring with other religious leaders, including many of the Bareilvi ulama, he ultimately announced a plan to raise a million volunteers,⁵⁴ but in fact, other than organizing special days of mourning for the Shahidganj Mosque, little was done to organize the agitation, for Pir Jamaat Ali Shah himself was wary of the more radical demands of many of the urban agitators. By January 1936 the urban agitators of the Ittihad-i Millat had become highly critical of the Pir's leadership. Two urban leaders issued a blistering attack on the Pir charging that 'the rich Muslims' were undermining the agitation and that the Pir was their tool,⁵⁵ while a Lahore daily charged that the Pir's statements seemed to reach the Government before they reached his own followers.⁵⁶ In order to try to salvage the agitation, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah called a special Shahidganj conference at Amritsar in January 1936, but the results of the conference only seemed to confirm the criticism, for it fell largely under the control of some of his wealthy Unionist followers, including Mir Maqbul Mahmud, one of the Pir's *murids* and the brother-in-law of the Unionist leader, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan.⁵⁷ Apparently to save his own prestige, the Pir left immediately on Haj. The fate of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in the Shahidganj agitation illustrates dramatically the conflicting pulls on the revivalist

⁵³ Appreciation of Shahidganj situation, F.H. Puckle, 6 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁵⁴ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 18/11/35.

⁵⁵ *Inquilab* (Lahore), 11 January 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A. The statement was made by Syed Habib and Mian Ferozuddin Ahmad.

⁵⁶ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 12 January 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

⁵⁷ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 22 January 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

sajjada nishins and indicates why, despite their religious concerns, they failed to develop effectively a religious attack on the Government and the Unionist Party.

When the Unionists swept the elections of 1937, therefore, they did not have to face any general religious opposition to their position. The Ahrar Party, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's Ittihad-i Millat Party, and the Muslim League, which in Punjab at this time was led by a small group of lawyers around Allama Iqbal, all contested the elections, but none showed significant strength in the rural areas. The Unionist program, which was based on the economic advance of the rural classes and the support of the Alienation of Land Act, was a defence of the existing power structure in the rural areas. This program had the strong support of most of the landed *sajjada nishins* on economic and political grounds. For the rural revivalists the Unionists offered no special religious appeal, but the tacit support of most was won either indirectly, through their personal ties to landed Unionist politicians in the localities, or else by reason of the lack of an acceptable religious alternative which did not threaten the structural and administrative bases of their position in rural society. The active religious support of such *pirs* for the Unionists was not required; their failure to join the religious opposition was enough to ensure Unionist success. As one of the local Unionist organizers analyzed the situation in 1936,

The Ahrars have begun with an awfully vigorous propaganda. At least they presume to have captured the towns. Still we don't fear if they do not begin with the villages. Villagers, you know, follow these 'Pirs' blindly Take care of the 'Pirs'. Ask them only to keep silent on the matter of elections. We don't require their help but they should not oppose us⁵⁸

In 1937, very few *pirs* opposed the Unionists, whose election victory reflected in many ways the triumph of the rural classes, both secular and religious, in the Punjab's political system.

Religious Leaders and the Muslim League

The relations between the Unionist Party and religious leaders in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrated that the political roles of religious

⁵⁸ Letter, Mohammad Bashir of Gurdaspur to Unionist Party headquarters, 9 May 1936. Unionist Party Papers, File D-17.

leaders were determined primarily by their structural position in the rural or urban areas. The Unionists were able to gain at least the passive support of most of the *sajjada nishins* because the pro-rural Unionist ideology subsumed the concerns of many of these *sajjada nishins* as hereditary leaders whose position was tied closely to the structure of rural society. This did not mean that many of these *sajjada nishins* did not have strong religious concerns, but that as long as politics were channelled primarily by the urban-rural cleavage, these religious concerns could not easily find political expression.

The significant development in Punjab politics after 1937 which was to affect most deeply the political allegiances of religious leaders was the emergence of the Muslim League as a political party transcending the rural-urban distinction which had previously dominated Punjab politics. The key to this development was the League's emergence as an all-India party, which, unlike the Unionists or the urban parties of the Punjab, was concerned primarily with representing the interests of Indian Muslims at an all-India level *vis-à-vis* the Congress and the British. As leader of the League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's all-India reputation allowed him to establish after 1937 a position of authority in Punjab Muslim politics independent of the provincial political parties which dominated Punjab affairs. But the establishment of such a position in Punjab politics was not accomplished immediately, nor was it an easy task for Jinnah. Jinnah's initial efforts to establish the League in the Punjab before the 1937 elections had brought him far closer to the urban parties than to the Unionists; it was the Ahrar, in fact, who were most sympathetic to his call for a united Muslim political party in 1936, while the Unionists, secure in their provincial strength, strongly rejected Jinnah's overtures for cooperation. But though Jinnah's interest in a new organization for Indian Muslims brought him closer to the urban Muslims, he was not an ideologue in the mould of the reformist ulama; he was interested in solid political strength and he was willing to compromise to develop it. Less than a year after the Unionist election victory of 1937, therefore, Jinnah forged a pact with the new Unionist Premier of the Punjab, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, by which Jinnah essentially recognized the authority of the Unionists in Punjab politics in return for their joining the Muslim League and supporting it at the all-India level. This did not, in the short run, give Jinnah much

additional authority in the Punjab itself, where the Unionist Party maintained its separate identity, but it established the League as a representative Muslim body, to which both the urban and the rural Muslim leaders of Punjab looked for the expression of Muslim political aspirations at the all-India level.⁵⁹

The Sikander-Jinnah Pact was subsequently to arouse considerable controversy in the Punjab, for it did not end the conflicts between urban and rural Muslims. The effect of the Pact was instead to bring such conflicts to a large extent within the League itself. Though some of the urban Muslims, including the Ahrar, became increasingly hostile to the League after Jinnah's compromise with the Unionists, a large number of urban Muslims supported the League after 1937, and they bombarded Jinnah with complaints after 1937 that the Unionists were attempting to takeover the provincial Muslim League organization only to stifle its expansion.⁶⁰ In fact, there was considerable truth in this charge, for the Unionists, though they supported Jinnah at the all-India level, were not seriously interested in an active Muslim League organization in Punjab. Jinnah, however, was wary of taking action so long as the Unionists were politically dominant in rural Punjab. He put pressure on the Unionists whenever possible to adhere to League policy and to strengthen the League organization, but he could not intervene to stop their efforts without sacrificing his position of neutrality and openly identifying himself

⁵⁹ Jinnah's and Sir Sikander's motives in forging the Pact at Lucknow in October 1937 remain the subject of considerable controversy. The best survey of the various factors involved is provided in Dr S.M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), pp. 237–45.

⁶⁰ An example of the kind of complaints against the Unionists to which Jinnah was subjected is provided by a letter from Malik Barkat Ali, leader of the urban faction in the Punjab League, to Jinnah in 1940. As a result of the Sikander-Jinnah Pact, Malik Barkat Ali wrote: 'the only persons who now form the so-called Muslim League are the Unionists, who owe allegiance first and last to Sir Sikander. Sir Sikander's only desire was to capture the organisation of the League and then to keep it inert.' Letter, Malik Barkat Ali to Jinnah, 4 December 1940; File #215, Quaide-Azam Papers, Quaid-e-Azam Papers Cell, Pakistan Ministry of Education, Islamabad.

with urban Muslim opinion.⁶¹ Though Jinnah was successful in keeping the League above the urban–rural conflict in the Punjab, therefore, it was, in the short run at least, largely at the expense of the development of an effective League organization in the province.

It was not until after the death of Sir Sikander in late 1942 that Jinnah saw an opportunity to free the League from its dependence on Unionist support, while maintaining its claim to transcend the urban–rural political conflicts of the province. After 1942, Jinnah began to put increasing pressure on the new Unionist Premier, Malik Khizr Hyat Tiwana, to take steps to breathe life into the League organization and to declare the unequivocal support of the Unionists for the concept of Pakistan, which had been the basis of the League's creed since 1940. But when this pressure failed, Jinnah decided in 1944 to abrogate the Sikander-Jinnah Pact and expel Malik Khizr Hyat from the League. Jinnah apparently hoped that this would spark a large-scale shift of rural leaders from the Unionists to the Muslim League, but in the short run he may have miscalculated for, despite continued factional defections to the League, the Unionists continued to enjoy the support of the great bulk of rural Muslim Assembly members.⁶² In the long run, however, Jinnah's policy paid off, for with the League firmly established as a symbol of Muslim political aspirations which was no longer associated exclusively with the urban Muslims, the League was able to force a showdown with the Unionists in the 1946 elections and to challenge them in the rural areas themselves.

The League's ability to appeal successfully for religious support in its attack on Unionist authority was in large measure the result of the independent position it had established—and the fact that it was not beholden to *any* particular group of religious leaders. In his efforts to promote the League in 1936, Jinnah had initially developed fairly close contacts with the reformist ulama of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi

⁶¹ Jinnah's attitude was exemplified when, as late as February 1943, he refused to give his sanction to an attempt by many of the urban Leaguers of Punjab to form a Muslim League Workers Board independent of the regular Unionist-dominated provincial League organization. *Eastern Times* (Lahore), 12 February 1943.

⁶² The suggestion that Jinnah may have initially miscalculated comes from Imran Ali Khan, *Punjab Politics in the Decade Before Partition* (Lahore: South Asian Institute, University of the Punjab, 1975), pp. 42–43.

Hind,⁶³ but since 1937, in trying to establish the neutrality of the League he had shunned contacts with religious leaders of any kind. At the time of the League's break with the Unionists in 1944 therefore, its contacts with religious leaders were very few. Paradoxically, however, it was precisely this long isolation from any organized group of religious leaders which was now to prove most important in facilitating the League's ability to gain religious support against the Unionists in the rural areas. Though Jinnah's isolation from religious leaders and his compromises with rural Muslim politicians had alienated his onetime allies among the reformist ulama, his policy had at the same time almost inadvertently opened up a new field of potential religious support from rural religious leaders. Appeals to rural *sajjada nishins* for support in opposition to the Unionists could now be made without associating the League with the religious attacks of the reformist ulama on the structure of rural sufi authority—attacks which had alienated rural *sajjada nishins* in the past. League leaders in the Punjab, who had been left with little solid political organization in the rural areas as a legacy of the Sikander–Jinnah Pact, were not slow to take advantage of this. In 1945 a number of Punjab League leaders began to appeal strongly for support on a religious basis, and among these, rural leaders took a prominent part. A good example is provided by Sir Sikander's son, Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan, who played an important role in helping to escalate the League's religious propaganda in the rural areas. In June 1945 Shaukat was present at a Sargodha (Shahpur) District Muslim League conference at Sial Sharif, site of one of the major Chishti revival shrines, where he promised that as a Muslim League leader he would not deviate from the path of Islam.⁶⁴ Several months later Shaukat declared that Pakistan would have a 'government of the Quran,'⁶⁵ and by January 1946 he was

⁶³ Jinnah's relations with the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind at the time of the 1937 elections are indicated by the first point of the election programme of the Central Muslim League Parliamentary Board, which called for 'due weight' to be given in all religious matters 'to the opinions of Jamiat-ul-Ulema Hind and the Mujtahids.' Syed Rais Ahmad Jafri, ed., *Rare Documents* (Lahore: Muhammad Ali Academy, 1967), p. 147.

⁶⁴ *Eastern Times* (Lahore), 6 June 1945.

⁶⁵ *Saadat* (Lyallpur), 14 January 1946. Reproduced in *Punjab Gazette*, Part III (13 September 1946), pp. 867–68.

urging that as the Muslim League was fighting for Islam, 'every Muslim must take part in this jihad.'⁶⁶ By that time Shaukat's appeal was typical of that being made by many Leaguers, and rural religious leaders responded to such appeals by coming out strongly in favor of the League and Pakistan.

The most vital religious support for Pakistan came from the *sajjada nishins* of the revivalist shrines, who had long sought an outlet for expressing their religious concerns in the political arena. The logic of the support of these religious leaders for Pakistan, as they entered the Muslim League struggle in 1945, was not nearly so well developed as was, for example, the religious position of reformist ulama like Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, who had long opposed the idea of Pakistan. But the basis of their position can be appreciated by briefly comparing their outlook with that of the Deobandi ulama. The Deobandi conception of the political role of Muslims in India had been, as Peter Hardy has observed, shaped deeply by the nature of their religious reforms. They emphasized religious education as the key to the united participation of Muslims in politics. Having answered the decline of the Muslim state by working to develop a Muslim community guided by a class of educated ulama which could regulate its own affairs, they were wary of the authority of Muslim politicians and of the idea of yielding power to a state controlled by such politicians. They had, as Peter Hardy says, developed a view of religious solidarity which was itself political and was based on the authority of the ulama, who interpreted the religious law and Muslim public opinion.⁶⁷ This view was threatened by the idea of a Pakistan in the hands of traditional Muslim politicians, such as those rural leaders who were increasingly coming to the support of the Muslim League.

For the revivalist *sajjada nishins*, on the other hand, the idea of a Muslim community politically regulated by the ulama was a novel one. The thrust of their concern had always been to influence the political leaders and their followers to regulate their lives according to religious injunctions. This view had been dramatized in their religious

⁶⁶ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), 13 January 1946.

⁶⁷ Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India, 1912–1947* (Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971), pp. 40–48.

relationships with local rural leaders, for example in Pir Mehr Ali Shah's insistence when accepting a leader like Sir Umar Hyat Khan Tiwana as a *murid* that he observe the injunctions of the *shariat*.⁶⁸ The idea of a state in the hands of such leaders was for them perfectly natural, for in the establishment of such a state based on the *shariat*, they could see the projection of their local religious work into a larger political arena. Such a vision was far more congenial to them than that of a Muslim community led by the ulama.

This view explains in large part the attitude of these *sajjada nishins* toward Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which was in sharp contrast to that of the reformist ulama who generally viewed Jinnah with distrust as a political man with little real awareness of Islam. The attitude of the revivalist *sajjada nishins* was well exemplified by that of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah. Jamaat Ali Shah had himself been given the title Amir-i Millat during the Shahidganj agitation, but he now congratulated Jinnah on having taken up this mantle for the Muslim community.⁶⁹ He is reported to have answered criticism of Jinnah at a Sunni religious conference at Benaras in February 1946 by saying: 'Think of Jinnah Sahib whatever you like, but I say that Jinnah Sahib is "Wali Allah".'⁷⁰ He is then said to have quoted Quran and *hadis* to prove it. Later, in another typical gesture, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah wrote to Jinnah advising him on the performance of the Haj and offering to accompany him. '... This proof of your fidelity to the strict principles of Islam will put your enemies to shame,' he wrote, 'and they will never be able to raise their heads before you . . .'.⁷¹ This kind of relationship with political leaders was nothing new for most of these *pirs*, and in contrast to the position of the reformist ulama of Deoband, it provided the political basis for their support of the Muslim League and Pakistan. The revivalist *pirs* had long been closely associated with the leaders of the Unionist Party at the local level, but they had at the same time, like the reformist ulama, been uneasy with

⁶⁸ Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mihr-i Munir*, p. 297.

⁶⁹ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), 30 January 1946.

⁷⁰ Letter, Hamid Hasan Qadri to Jinnah, 22 July 1946. Punjab Vol. II, Shams-ul Hasan Collection, Karachi. I would like to thank Khalid S. Hasan for permission to use this collection.

⁷¹ Letter, Jamaat Ali Shah to Jinnah, n.d. (July 1946?). Punjab Vol. II, Shams-ul Hasan Collection, Karachi.

the essentially secular basis for Unionist political organization in provincial politics. With the transfer of an important section of the rural Muslim leadership to the Muslim League in the political realignments after 1944, the revivalist *pirs* found in the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership a political platform which allowed them to maintain their local political and religious connections and at the same time to express their religious concerns in politics at the provincial and national level.⁷²

Ironically, however, the same structural considerations which disposed the revivalist *sajjada nishins* after 1944 toward the support of the Muslim League and Pakistan, also rendered them particularly difficult for the Muslim League to organize politically. As the Muslim League began to organize religious leaders behind its cause in 1945, it found that the only existing model for the political organization of religious leaders was the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, which had grown out of the organizational reforms of the Deobandi ulama. Nevertheless, the leaders of the League, who had had little experience in the past in the organization of religious leaders, attempted to use the Jamiat as a model for a parallel organization of religious leaders. To create such a parallel organization they naturally turned first to ulama experienced in this form of organization, and this meant the minority of Deobandi ulama who showed sympathy to the League. Foremost among these was Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, who had once

⁷² The importance of local religious ties between these *pirs* and their politically prominent followers should not, in explaining their support for Pakistan, be interpreted in too narrow a sense. By and large, it was not direct economic and political pressure from their followers so much as a more general concern for the shape of the new political system which pushed them toward support of the Muslim League. The Pir of Sial, for example, was one of the first revivalist *pirsto* actively enter the political field in support of the Muslim League, in spite of the fact that among his more wealthy *murids* were many of the Shahpur Tiwanas, who remained Unionists. Direct economic pressure from these local magnates is difficult to observe and seems in the emotionally charged religious atmosphere of 1945 and 1946 to have had little effect on the Pir's stance. One of the bigger Tiwana landlords, Nawab Allah Bakhsh, for example, continued to have a close religious relationship with the Pir of Sial in spite of their sharp political opposition, and before his death in 1948, the Nawab sought to dedicate 15 squares of his land in *waqf* as a family graveyard with the Pir of Sial as *mutawalli*.

been an active member of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, and who now was called upon to head the new, pro-Pakistan Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam. With the inauguration of the Punjab branch at Lahore in December 1945,⁷³ an attempt was made to expand the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam to include the sufi *pirs* who comprised the bulk of the League's rural religious support. Maulana Ghulam Murshid, *khatib* of the Badshahi Masjid at Lahore, who organized the Punjab branch of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam was well placed to do this, for though he had studied at Deoband and had been a student of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, his family came out of the rural revivalist tradition in west Punjab.⁷⁴ Ghulam Murshid attempted to dramatize the representative character of the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam by organizing a big provincial session at Lahore in January 1946, at which he selected as chairmen of the different sittings of the conference ulama of different religious perspectives: Pir Jamaat Ali Shah at one sitting, Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Sialkoti of the Ahl-i Hadis at another, and Maulana Zafar Ahmad Thanawi of Deoband at yet another.⁷⁵ But for all the enthusiasm the conference generated, particularly by its resolve to defy a Government regulation prohibiting the use of undue spiritual influence in electioneering, the conference was limited generally to urban ulama and politicians. Though Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani subsequently issued a poster calling for support of the League in the name of the 300 or so ulama and *mashaikh* who attended the conference,⁷⁶ few of Punjab's rural *pirs*, whose influence remained diffuse and centered on the shrines, took any organizational part.

Most of the *sajjada nishins* who supported the League thus remained outside the Muslim League organization. But as the elections

⁷³ *Inquilab* (Lahore), 16 December 1945.

⁷⁴ Ghulam Murshid's father was a *khalifa* of the Pir of Taunsa, and, in addition to Deoband, he studied at Ajmer. He was also principal for a time of the Dar-al ulum Naumania. Interview, Maulana Ghulam Murshid, Lahore, 31 December 1975.

⁷⁵ *Ihsan* (Lahore), 29 January 1946. Reproduced in *Punjab Gazette*, Part III (13 September 1946), p. 861.

⁷⁶ Poster, '*Ulama our Mashaikh-i Islam se Apil*,' n.d. Mian Abdul Aziz Collection, Lahore. I would like to thank the family of the late Mian Abdul Aziz for permission to use this collection.

approached, this independence from the League organization proved to be a reflection of what was, in fact, their greatest political strength—their traditional ties with local rural politics, which allowed them to exert influence in the local factional contests on which the election hinged. The significance of this can be readily appreciated from a preliminary election analysis published by the *Eastern Times*, a pro-League daily, in September 1945. The *Eastern Times* observed that, as in other elections, the outcome of the Unionist–Muslim League contest was likely to be decided by factional alignments in the rural areas. But the Muslim League, it noted, had gained a powerful weapon in countering the Government influence of the Unionists in such factional rivalries, for the League had ‘not only a powerful slogan but also the support of practically all the important “pirs” in the province and “sajjada nishins” of the famous shrines of Tonsa, Golra, Alipur, Sialsharif, and Jalalpur.’⁷⁷ That the *Eastern Times* mentioned these five particular shrines was no accident, for these were probably the five most prestigious revivalist shrines in the Punjab. Though *sajjada nishins* of many of the older shrines played perhaps an even more active role in factional politics than the revivalists, as a group they were not able to match the role of the revivalists in using religion to undermine traditional Unionist factional strength in the countryside. In Multan District, for example, the family of the Gilani *sajjada nishin* of the pre-revival shrine of Musa Pak Shahid provided the factional backbone of Muslim League support in the district, but its influence was countered by that of its traditional factional rival, the family of the *sajjada nishin* of the shrine of Baha al-Haq, which supported the Unionists.⁷⁸ Though the revivalist *sajjada nishins* were not themselves factional leaders of the standing of these religious families, it was they who injected a religious fervor into the politics of Punjab which upset most of the traditional factional alignments on which Unionist political strength had rested.

⁷⁷ *Eastern Times* (Lahore), 6 September 1945.

⁷⁸ Rivalry between these two families had been going on in the Multan Municipal Committee and in the District Board for decades. In 1945 and 1946, the competing Muslim League and Unionist parties in the district were often referred to as the Gilani party and the Qureshi party. See, for example, personal file of Abdus Sattar Shah, Unionist worker, Multan. Unionist Party Papers.

A good example of the influence of these *sajjada nishins* in local politics comes from Jhelum District, where the local faction associated with Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the uncle of Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur, had shifted into the Muslim League at the time of the League–Unionist break in 1944. This faction was opposed in Jhelum by a strong Unionist group which continued to control the local boards even after Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan’s shift to the Muslim League. But during the second half of 1945, as the issue became an increasingly religious one and the *pirs* openly entered the contest, the Unionists found it impossible to hold this faction together. Not only did Pir Fazl Shah begin to campaign openly for the League, but other *sajjada nishins* also entered the field. ‘The Muslim League has started very intense propaganda on religious lines,’ one Unionist worker wrote to his Party headquarters in December 1945. ‘Pir M. Husain Shah, son of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, is making a tour of the Jhelum Tehsil and issuing *Fatwas* that Muslim League is the only Islamic community and that all the rest are *Kafirs*.’⁷⁹ Two weeks later the Unionist organization in the district was desperate. ‘I must bring to your notice,’ the district organizer wrote, ‘that 80% population of this district is “Pir-ridden”. They are blind followers of Pirs. Pir Jamaat Ali Shah’s son’s personal contacts and *Fatwas* have created great obstacles in the way of our workers . . . No amount of individual propaganda can convert the blind adherents of the Pirs.’⁸⁰ Under such pressure the Unionists watched almost helplessly as their factional support dissolved in Jhelum District. In the final election result the Unionists lost all three Assembly seats in the district, and the Muslim League carried over 75 percent of the rural Muslim vote.

A similar story emerges in other districts as well. In Rawalpindi District, the influence of the family of Pir Fazl Shah was given a large measure of credit by the Unionists for tipping the scales against them in Gujar Khan tahsil,⁸¹ while in Rawalpindi tahsil the Unionist

⁷⁹ Letter, Bashir Husain, Jhelum District Organizer, to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, Zamindara League (Unionist Party) Secretary, 13 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

⁸⁰ Jhelum District Organization Monthly Report for December 1945, 2 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

⁸¹ Report of Mufti Murid Ahmad, Divisional Organizer, to headquarters, 3 February 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File E-105.

organizer felt in December 1945 that it was the Muslim League candidate's 'old machinations and election tricks, coupled with the out and out support of the Pir of Golra,' which was responsible for the Muslim League's commanding position.⁸² In Montgomery District Unionist leaders expected to carry the district until the very eve of the election, when the arrest of a local *pir* for openly violating the regulation against the use of undue spiritual influence caused a sensation in the district. Analyzing the subsequent defeat of all four Unionist candidates in the district, a local Unionist organizer remarked that the 'prosecution of Chan Pir was the chief cause of the general conflagration which had upset the jangli mind in all four tehsils.'⁸³ The influence of these *pirs* was certainly not the only factor in these elections, for in Montgomery District a reaction against the open exploitation of Government pressure by the district Unionist leader and the last minute defections of certain leading families to the Muslim League undermined the Unionist position in the final days before the election. But there is little doubt that the widespread support for Pakistan of the revivalist *sajjada nishins* in particular played a major role in the popular perception of the Muslim League campaign in the rural areas as a religious movement, which undermined traditional Unionist factional strength in the districts.

Perhaps the most ironic development in this connection was the almost desperate attempt by the Unionists, as the support of the *sajjada nishins* for the League escalated, to counter this religious element by turning for religious support to the ulama of the Ahrar and the pro-Congress Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind, ulama who had long been their severest critics. The Unionists had made some organized attempts to win support among the *sajjada nishins*, but among the revivalists they had little success. As the religious nature of the campaign became more pronounced, they found that the only well-organized groups of religious leaders in opposition to the Muslim League were the reformist ulama who backed the Ahrar and the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Hind. Unionist workers in the field in late 1945 and early 1946 were

⁸² Report of Rawalpindi Divisional Organizer, 19 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File F-29.

⁸³ Letter, Agha Barkat Ali Khan to headquarters, 8 January (February?) 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-59.

desperate for some sort of religious counter to the propaganda of the *pirs* and asked for religious support from wherever it was available. As the district organizer for Jhelum wrote in December 1945, political propaganda was of no use against religious appeals, and ‘Fatwas in rebuttal are the only antidote, now.’⁸⁴ Either first-rate religious speakers like Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari should be sent, he wrote, or else *fatwas* against the Muslim League should be obtained from Deoband or Bareilly and circulated in the district. The story was much the same in other districts. The last-minute telegram from Multan to Unionist headquarters—‘Kindly send Maulvies . . .’—was typical.⁸⁵ And the Unionist leaders could only respond with those maulvis who were willing to attack the Muslim League. As the Unionist Secretary responded to the request from Shahpur District, ‘I am sending a party of eight Maulvis who have come to me from Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, Delhi . . .’⁸⁶ This alliance of the Unionists with their old enemies naturally seemed strange, and particularly so to the Muslim League, to whom it seemed to be pure opportunist politics. The pro-Muslim League daily, *Nawai Waqt*, made fun of this effort by the Unionists to get religious support, charging that they were so desperate that they were sending not trained maulvis, but Deoband undergraduates who were paid 30 or 40 rupees a month to do their propaganda, and were calling them Deobandi Fazal Ustads (or graduates).⁸⁷ In fact, the best of these religious men, like Sayyid Ataullah Shah Bokhari, were moving religious orators, but their use by the Unionists only pointed up dramatically the fact that the Muslim League had almost completely taken over the rural religious base on which the Unionist Party itself had once relied.

⁸⁴ Letter, Bashir Husain to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, 13 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

⁸⁵ Telegram, Nur Mohammad to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, 18 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-51.

⁸⁶ Letter, Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha to Nawab Allah Bakhsh Tiwana, 16 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-45.

⁸⁷ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), 23 January 1946.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to delineate the background of the religious support for the Pakistan movement in the Punjab by looking in particular at the connections between the structure of religious leadership and the structure of Muslim politics in 20th-century Punjab. Only the rough outlines of these connections have been provided, but nevertheless some important patterns have emerged. From the time of the conversion to Islam of much of western Punjab at the hands of sufi saints, religious leadership in the rural areas was focused on the hereditary *sajjada nishins* of the shrines of these saints. The position of these hereditary religious leaders was tied closely into the political organization of the rural areas, and this produced a considerable unity of political and economic interests between the religious and the secular leaders of rural society. Such common interests were strengthened by the British, who, in moulding a system of rural administration in the Punjab, recognized the *sajjada nishins* of these shrines as part of a single ruling class of hereditary rural leaders. When the Unionist Party emerged in the 1920s as a party of rural interests led by this class of rural leaders, the *sajjada nishins* as a group were strongly disposed, therefore, to support it and to oppose the religious attacks on the Unionists which emanated from primarily urban reformist leaders.

As a result of a widespread revival of sufi influence in western Punjab in the post-Mughal era, however, many of the *sajjada nishins* in 20th-century Punjab had also developed very strong religious commitments to spreading a deeper awareness of Islam. This revival had spread initially through the Chishti order but was later widened by the development of the Ahl-i Sunnat o Jamaat (Barelvi) group of ulama who gave religious legitimacy to the continuing emphasis on the forms of religious influence centered on the shrines. The *sajjada nishins* who drew on this revivalist tradition were not satisfied with the secular basis of the political system developed by the Unionists, but due to their structural grounding as *sajjada nishins* in the rural political milieu, they did not generally give the Unionists active opposition. The Unionist Party was thus able, with tacit religious support in rural areas, to build a strong system of political authority based on rural control, and this propelled the Party to its sweeping victory in the 1937 elections.

With the emergence of the Muslim League, however, which transcended the political question of rural interests versus urban, the revivalist *sajjada nishins* saw the opportunity to put rural politics on a more solid religious foundation. The concept of Pakistan was seen by them in traditional terms as the establishment of a religious state, ruled by the traditional leaders of rural society but firmly based on the *shariat*. In the elections of 1946 the revivalist *sajjada nishins* provided the vanguard of religious support for Pakistan and played an important role in carrying the Muslim League to triumph over the Unionist Party. The victory was a sweeping religious mandate for Pakistan and marked the most important step on the road to Pakistan's formation.

The important role of the *sajjada nishins* in the Muslim League's election victory was also an important pointer to the nature of the Pakistan state which was to emerge. Structurally, the revivalist *sajjada nishins* were themselves deeply rooted in rural society and their support for the Muslim League in no way represented a repudiation of the class of landed leaders who had long wielded power in western Punjab under the Unionist banner. The victory for Pakistan represented only a call for a new religious definition of the old rural order, not for a new alignment of political power such as the reformist ulama had called for. The further definition of this system, however, remained to be developed in the new Muslim state.

A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab

For Muslims to be agreed and unified on a true purpose is a magnificent gift.

—Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani

In 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, first suggested that the Muslims of India were not simply a religious community but a nation. But it was only after the Muslim League won the overwhelming majority of Muslim seats in the 1946 Indian provincial elections, particularly in the two largest Muslim-majority provinces, Bengal and Punjab, that Jinnah could argue convincingly to others that he, and the Muslim League, represented the voice of that nation. In critical ways, the elections of 1946 thus laid the foundations for the emergence of Pakistan.¹ A state predicated on the existence of a Muslim nation, Pakistan occupies a position of unusual importance in the history of the Muslim world and of colonial nationalism, for it represents the first post-colonial nation created on the basis of a self-consciously Muslim nationalist program.

But how was this image of a 'Muslim nation' constructed? The historical relationship between the languages of nationalism and religious community has been in the past the subject of considerable controversy. In his seminal work on nationalism, Benedict Anderson stressed the fundamentally contradictory character of the 'imagined'

¹ For a good discussion of the 1946 elections in the Punjab, see I. A. Talbot., 'The 1946 Punjab Elections,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1980), pp. 65–91.

religious community and the ‘imagined’ community of the nation. The two, he argued, were rooted in fundamentally different conceptions of time and of the relationship of the individual to the collectivity. Anderson in fact viewed them as related largely along a historical continuum, in which nationalist conceptions of community succeeded religious conceptions with the advent of modernity and the spread of print capitalism. Yet, at the same time, Anderson pointed toward the close links between nationalism and the language of religious devotion.²

Analysis of Muslim nationalism has been the subject of particular contention. Like many Muslim intellectuals elsewhere, many early 20th-century Muslim thinkers in India questioned whether Islam could ever be reconciled with European notions of nationalism.³ Some contemporary scholars, likewise, have seen the phrase as a misnomer. They have argued that the strongly universalist notion of religious community embedded in Islam has been inherently antithetical to any conception of bounded nationhood.⁴ Others, such as Ernest Gellner, have argued that the distinctive rationalism of Islam’s high culture has allowed it to take over many of nationalism’s modern social functions.⁵ Abstract discussions about the relationship between varying interpretations of Islam and the nation have in fact preoccupied a good deal of the scholarship.

And yet, few have examined the interaction between religious and national visions of community from the perspective of the election

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

³ See, for example, Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 115–25. For the intellectual debate on Muslim nationhood in India, see Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 200–7.

⁴ The inherent tensions between Islam and nationalism are stressed, for example, in Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), pp. 87–89.

⁵ Ernest Gellner, ‘Fundamentalism as a Comprehensive System: Soviet Marxism and Islamic Fundamentalism Compared,’ in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds, *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 285.

process, in order to analyze how the image of the Muslim nation was actually created. Though a growing body of literature has suggested how complex the myriad interrelationships between nationalism and religion have been, the electoral arena has attracted little attention. In his otherwise excellent study of 'religious nationalism' in the subcontinent, for example, Peter van der Veer hardly mentions elections.⁶ Elections, in fact, have often been viewed as a nonproblematic structure for the expression of popular views, an arena in which different identities, interests, and visions of community simply find competitive expression.

Yet elections, as a result of their distinctive position in the structuring of relations between state and society, called forth a distinctive pattern of community rhetoric—a pattern whose analysis, I will argue, gives new insight into the relationship between religion and nationalism. The election *process* was, in fact, critical to the reconceptualization of community that made the merging of religious and national visions of community possible. Embedded in the structure of colonial elections was a concept of political community and individual autonomy that influenced substantially the classical rhetoric of Islamic community as it played itself out in the electoral arena. By examining the electoral rhetoric of the Punjab Muslim League during the critical election campaign of 1946, this chapter will analyze both the conditions that gave meaning to Muslim nationalism and the continuing contradictions that the term embodied.

Colonial Elections

The significance of elections in late colonial India lay largely in the fact that they provided a critical institutional framework that brought into collision two discourses of community rooted in the interconnected realms of the colonial state and of Indian Muslim society (see Chapter 7). One was the discourse of Muslim community as an element in the British construction of state power; and the other, the discourse of Muslim community self-definition. A mass of writing on the Muslims of colonial India has analyzed the development of both of these discourses, and their background here can only be briefly

⁶ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

sketched out. Yet the two were, each in its own way, critical to shaping the meaning of Muslim nationalism.

One discourse was rooted in the colonial 'sociology of knowledge', written about extensively by Bernard Cohn.⁷ In order to define foundations for their rule, the British developed an elaborate structure of knowledge defining the nature of the 'communities' that composed Indian society. The aim of the British was largely to essentialize and particularize the cultural identities of Indians so that these identities could be used by the colonial state while offering no effective challenge to its overarching authority. Though many Muslims, with sometimes universalistic pretensions, chafed at British efforts to fix the meaning of a Muslim identity according to external, objective standards that made this identity a matter far more of descent than belief, the British nevertheless succeeded in defining an administrative image of Muslim identity in India that fit generally into the structure of their regime. The British colonial state manipulated the notion of Muslim community (like Sikh and Hindu community) in myriad ways (through the law, the army, the census, the electoral process) to define a structure of Muslim leadership that would help to stabilize their regime. In essence, the British defined Muslimness as a uniform, non-problematic identity, an identity that could be bureaucratically fixed and enumerated.⁸ Within that structure they recognized a broad spectrum of influential men, with a range of backgrounds and power bases (often with no connection to Islam), as Muslim 'leaders'. Many prominent Muslims in fact worked within these British categories, accepting them as an avenue of access to power within the structure of the colonial state.

⁷ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁸ For a discussion of the significance of such 'enumerated' identities, see Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Religion and Politics and Modernity,' in Sybille Fritsch-Oppermann, ed. *Fundamentalismus Der Moderne? Christen und Muslime im Dialog* (Rehburg-Loecum: Evangelische Akademie Loccum, 1996), pp. 241–62. Kaviraj's contrast of enumerated identities with pre-modern 'fuzzy' identities is seriously misleading, however, to the extent that it ignores the pervasive significance of 'fuzzy' identities (such as kinship and genealogy) in both pre-modern and modern identity construction and fails to stress how the meaning of enumerated identities was negotiated in public only in relationship to these other identities. This is the burden of the argument here.

A second discourse of Muslim identity, however, operated in sharp counterpoint to the first one. The century of British colonial rule following 1857 witnessed a plethora of Muslim writings, social and reform movements, festivals and popular activities, riots, and so forth, that revolved not around state definitions of Muslim community but around Muslim self-definition. British rule, by its introduction of new technologies, new forms of communication, and new patterns of economic activity, itself encouraged much of this activity; but most of it was carried out independently of the structure of the state. Debates over the nature of Muslim identity and community were sometimes played out in religious disputation, sometimes in new structures of education, sometimes in public protests over symbolic Islamic issues (such as the destruction of a mosque), and sometimes in riots and competition focusing on precedence in public festivals and processions. Noteworthy about almost all these activities, however, was that they involved conflicts in *public* venues, whether in the newly emerging press, other new forms of publication, conflicts surrounding the public festivals that marked the Muslim ritual calendar, or public oratory and mass meetings in open spaces. While debate over Muslim self-definition was hardly new, the ‘publicness’ of the debate—itsself structured in part by the changes accompanying colonial rule—gave it a distinctive importance in 20th-century India.⁹

The significance of elections lay largely in the fact that the process of electoral competition increasingly brought these two levels of community definition together in one arena. From the 1920s onward, the pattern of elections significantly shaped the pace of the nationalist movement in India and influenced the meaning of nationalism for the Congress and the Muslim League alike. Unlike the Congress, of course, the Muslim League never developed an effective mass party organization. But the *structure* of elections nevertheless proved critical for the development of Muslim nationalism. The establishment of separate electorates (or, self-contained legislative constituencies for Muslims) has long figured prominently in narratives of the coming of Pakistan. But it is vital to the argument here that these were important not simply because they were *separate* but also because they

⁹ For analysis, see Sandria B. Freitag, ‘Introduction,’ in the special issue on ‘Aspects of the Public in Colonial South Asia,’ *South Asia* (New Series), vol. 14, no. 1 (June 1991), pp. 1–13.

were *electorates* that defined a new form of public arena. On the one hand, the British introduction of separate electorates guaranteed that colonial elections fit into their overarching framework of community manipulation. The definition of separate constituencies for Muslims (demarcated only by flat, census definitions) allowed the men and women elected from these constituencies to claim to speak as Muslim representatives, even though their local power, and their ability to win local elections, usually hinged not on any appeal to Islam but on the mobilization of supporters gained through access to wealth, land, kinship ties, or other forms of patronage and local connection.¹⁰ At the same time, however, and increasingly so in the 1930s, elections offered also a new, important *public* venue for disputation that drew in those already involved in other forms of public debate about the meaning of Islamic community. This led to the increasing politicization of the rhetoric of Muslim community about self-definition and, for the first time, significant popular debate over the meaning of Muslim identity in a public and political arena attached *directly* to the structure of the state. While this may not have changed significantly patterns of Muslim leadership in the Punjab, the election *process* came increasingly to provide a new public venue in which the cultural bonds of community (and thus of reciprocity) linking Muslim leaders and their followers were openly debated and in which the meaning of 'Muslim community' was redefined.

The elections of 1946 were certainly not the first in the Punjab in which the rhetoric of Muslim community self-definition played an important role. The 1935 reforms, under which the 1946 elections were contested, had expanded the franchise in Punjab to include about a quarter of the adult population,¹¹ and in the wake of the reforms, the

¹⁰ How separate electorates affected the process of community representation and community self-definition remains a critical subject that has not, as far as I am aware, been seriously studied. For a step in this direction, see James Chiriyankandath, "'Democracy" Under the Raj: Elections and Separate Representation in British India,' *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 30, no. 1 (March 1992), pp. 39–64.

¹¹ In the Punjab, approximately 24 percent of the adult population (and a perhaps somewhat larger percentage of the adult male population) gained the vote in Assembly elections after 1935. Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in Panjab, 1920–1947* (Delhi: Manohar, 1987), p. 19. Access to the franchise was

Punjab elections of 1937 witnessed a significant expansion of electoral rhetoric focusing on community self-definition, particularly in the cities. But the 1946 elections offer an extraordinary window for analyzing how the process of elections shaped the image of Muslim community that helped ultimately to give meaning to the notion of Pakistan.

Muslim League Election Rhetoric

As the elections of 1946 approached, the Punjab Muslim League Publicity Committee (*Sho'ba-i Nashr o Isha'at*) issued a large number of flyers calling on Punjabi Muslims to vote in favor of the candidates of the Muslim League. The analysis in this chapter is focused largely on the rhetoric of community as it emerged in those flyers. Though it is impossible to know precisely how these flyers were used, they were presumably distributed to Muslim League workers to guide them in appeals to voters or were posted in cities and villages for Muslims to read. Some of them reprinted announcements of support for the Muslim League from the newspapers or statements by Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah or other League leaders. Taken together, they provide a compact, but critical, body of source material from which one can analyze the official rhetoric of the Punjab provincial Muslim League as it contested the 1946 elections.¹²

established primarily by educational qualifications, payment of a minimum land revenue or tax for property owners, or occupation by tenants of a minimum quantity of land (or payment of a minimum house rent in the cities). There were other miscellaneous qualifications for voting as well. Women had separate qualifications and their own constituencies. When the Legislative Assembly franchise was established in the mid-1930s, approximately 2.25 million Punjabis were included on the rolls. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947* (Delhi: Manohar, 1988), p. 96.

¹² The collection of these flyers that I used comes from the Mian Abdul Aziz Collection in Lahore. There are approximately 40 different flyers in two separate printed collections, referred to hereafter as the small collection (SC), with eight sheets, and the large collection (LC), with 44 sheets, some flyers running to more than one sheet. All are in Urdu (though a few have Quranic quotations in Arabic, with Urdu explanations, and one or two have Persian verses or quotations in English).

The provincial elections held in early 1946 were the first provincial elections held after the new Labour government in England had made clear its intention to leave India. For all parties concerned to play a role in the negotiations leading to the British departure, these elections thus took on critical significance. For Jinnah and the Muslim League, the elections in Punjab were of particularly vital import; for Muslim politics in the Punjab had long been dominated not by the Muslim League but by the Unionist Party, a party of rural interests led by Muslim landlords but which included many Hindu agriculturists as well. It was a party whose local roots were deeply embedded in rural tribal and kinship structures, personal factions, and official influence. Jinnah had briefly allied himself with the Unionist Party in 1937, in order to gain Punjabi backing for the Muslim League's position at the all-India level. But in 1944 the Unionists and Muslim League had split in the Punjab, in part over the League's support for the concept of Pakistan. This had left the League with relatively little support in the Punjab Assembly. It was thus essential to Jinnah's all-India position, as well as to his call for Pakistan, that he establish in the 1946 elections a claim for the League to speak for Punjab's Muslims.

The Punjab election campaign of 1946 in fact revolved around a welter of issues deployed by the Muslim League to mobilize opposition to the Unionists. As Ian Talbot has argued, the League made extensive use of economic grievances that had developed during World War II, including rationing, shortages, bureaucratic high-handedness, and a government food policy that controlled prices that rural producers could get for their grain. The grievances of soldiers demobilized in 1945 also provided the League with arguments to use against a Unionist Ministry that had been in power throughout the war.¹³

As the elections approached, however, such concerns were subsumed in official League propaganda (and in the League's election flyers) by a strong focus on the concept of Pakistan. League flyers

¹³ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, pp. 163–66. The Unionist Ministry was led by Sikandar Hayat Khan until his death in late 1942, then by Malik Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana. The high-water mark in the development of the League's economic critique of the Unionists came with the publication of a provincial Muslim League manifesto in 1944 whose wording was strongly influenced by the Punjab Communists.

repeatedly invoked 'Pakistan': 'Even on foot, give your vote,' one flyer declared. 'In the path of Pakistan, this is no big sacrifice. Long live the Muslim League; Long Live Pakistan!'¹⁴ These flyers contrasted Pakistan rhetorically with both British colonial and Hindu domination.¹⁵ Muslims had to answer one central question, one flyer noted, and that was whether they wanted to trade slavery to the British for slavery to the Hindus.¹⁶ In several flyers, Pakistan was juxtaposed to '*akhand Hindustan*' (united India); it was to be 'an independent Islamic state (*azad Islami riya-sat*).'¹⁷ One flyer cited the poet Muhammad Iqbal's 1930 reference to the cre-ation of a strong Muslim state in 'northwest Hindustan.'¹⁸ Another simply equated Pakistan with the notion that in provinces where Muslims were a majority, they would rule.¹⁹ But the nature and meaning of Pakistan as a geographical entity or as a particular kind of state were rarely explored. Generally speaking, the posters simply equated Pakistan with the glory, triumph and unity of the Muslim community in India, and with the Muslim League. As an appeal from the *sajjada nishin* (shrine custodian) of Ajmer declared, support of the Muslim League meant both Islamic honor and the prosperity of the community (*qaum*).²⁰

¹⁴ Flyer no. 28 (LC): '*Musalman votaron ka farz: paidal chal kar bhi vot den.*'

¹⁵ This was linked in at least one flyer with the broader movement of Muslim opposition to colonialism in the world at large: 'Do the Muslims of Punjab ... understand that the independence of the Muslim world is connected to Pakistan?' Flyer no. 6 (SC): '*Kangresi rahnuma Mistar Rajagopalacharya ne kaha tha. . .*'

¹⁶ Flyer no. 4-5 (LC): '*Amir-i Hizbullah ka ailan.*'

¹⁷ For example, '*Pakistan or akhand Hindustan?*' one flyer asked. 'That is, are they [the Muslims] one *qaum* or a sect (*firqa*) [that is, part of a larger whole]?' And the eventual answer is that they are themselves by their own nature [*khud apni zat se*] a *qaum*: 'Their politics are separate, their society, their culture, civilization and principles of life are separate.' Flyer no. 7 (SC): '*Anewale intikhabat kis liye hain?*'

¹⁸ Flyer no. 38 (LC): '*Islami riyasat qa'im hokar rahegi.*'

¹⁹ In provinces with a Hindu majority, Hindus would rule. Flyer no. 4-5 (LC): '*Amir-i Hizbullah ka ailan.*'

²⁰ Flyer no. 3 (LC): '*Shaikh al-masha'ikh Hazrat Diwan Saiyid Al-i Rasul Ali Khan, sajjada nishin, . . . ka paigham Musalmanan-i Panjab aur subah Sirhad ke nam.*'

But what, then, was the idea or image of Pakistan (*tasawwur-i Pakistan*) that drove the Muslim League's election campaign? The League's argument for Pakistan depended heavily on its identification of the Pakistan demand with the fulfilment of the Muslim community, and this in turn depended on its mobilization of an image of the community that would render the creation of a Muslim state not only attractive but necessary for Punjabi Muslims. Naturally, the contrast with both Hindu and colonial domination helped to shape the meaning of Pakistan: Pakistan was to be culturally Muslim (not Hindu) and independent (of colonial domination). This contrast with colonial and Hindu domination provided for many the link between Pakistan and the solution to the economic and social grievances held by rural Muslims. Whatever one's economic grievances under British and Unionist rule, Pakistan could be portrayed (in the League's propaganda) as the solution.²¹

But, strikingly, it was not only (or even primarily) the contrast with Hindu and colonial domination that drove the rhetorical construction of a moral image of Pakistan. Instead, the moral necessity of Pakistan was rooted rhetorically in opposition to a very different Other—the spectre of internal dissension and disorder among Muslims themselves. Far more than the danger of Hindu domination, a vision of divided, false, and misguided Muslim loyalties stalked the rhetoric of these election posters. Indeed, the existence of internal division gave the rhetorical fear of Hindu domination (and the history of colonialism) its real edge. It was the reality of internal divisions among Muslims that gave the demand for Pakistan, a symbol of a united moral community, its most powerful resonance.

The discussion of this dissension and disorder took several forms. On one level, divisions among Muslims were overtly political and epitomized by the League's opponents in its election contests. Whether in direct appeals from Jinnah, or otherwise, election posters attacked the policies and positions of the Muslim groups opposing the Muslim League in the Punjab, most notably the Ahrar, the Khaksars,

²¹ For example, a pamphlet of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation simply directed its rural canvassers to find out a village's 'social problems and difficulties' and then to tell the villagers, whatever the problems, that 'the main cause of their problems was the Unionists' and that the solution was 'Pakistan'. Quoted in Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 165.

the Muslim members of the Congress, and, of course, the Unionist Party.²² It was, of course, the structure of separate electorates that encouraged the League to focus its most pointed rhetoric on these Muslim competitors. But League attacks on these parties fixated not just on their competing policies but on the more fundamental threat they posed to the unity of the Muslim community. Election flyers repeated nothing more frequently than that the Muslim League was the *sole* representative political organization (*wahid numayinda jama'at*) of India's Muslims. In the Muslim League's rhetoric, support for this claim and support for Pakistan were in fact inseparable. Only a 100 percent League election victory, one flyer said, would allow Jinnah, 'our *behtarin wakil*' (best advocate, or lawyer), to negotiate Pakistan into reality.²³

The precise character of the challenges to unity represented by other parties of course differed. The support of the Ahrar, the Khaksars, and Congress Muslims was concentrated largely in Punjab's cities and thus posed little effective challenge to most of the League's candidates. But the position of these other parties nevertheless acted as an important foil in shaping the image of unity defined in League rhetoric. The League criticized all three parties for disrupting the community by holding open public meetings attacking Pakistan. As Jinnah declared on one poster: 'For the sake of Islamic *akhlaq* (morality), Islamic *ittehad* (unity) and Islamic *ta'limat* (teachings), Muslims should not take part in Ahrar, Khaksar, or Congress meetings. We can bear difference of opinion, but we cannot bear disturbance, riot, curses and lies.'²⁴ Yet another poster outlined more clearly the threat to unity that these parties posed. Though the Ahrar claimed to be interested in independence and the

²² Founded in 1929 by ex-khilafatists and ex-Congress Muslims, the Ahrar party combined an egalitarian social program with a strong religious commitment to *toshariat* (see Chapter 8). The Khaksar party stressed regimented organization and obedience to its leader, Inayatullah Mashriqi. Both strongly opposed the Muslim League in 1945–46 and attacked Jinnah as much on personal as on ideological grounds.

²³ Flyer no. 2 (LC): '*Ulama aur masha'ikh-i Islam ki apil.*' The quoted description of Jinnah is not in this flyer. It comes instead from Flyer no. 7 (LC): '*Ghulain Murtaza Shah Ajmeri al-Pakpattani . . . ka ailan-i haq.*'

²⁴ Flyer no. 12 (LC): '*Musalmanan! Laghav baten se bacho.*'

establishment of a *hukumat-i ilahi* (divine government), their opposition to Pakistan suggested something far more dangerous. 'The purpose of the Ahrar,' one flyer declared, 'is only to cause an uproar (*hangama*), even though today the first duty (*farz*) of India's 10 crore (100 million) Muslims is to *become one*.'²⁵ Though these parties had little real chance to win a majority of Muslim constituencies, League posters portrayed their public threat to the unity of the community as very real.

With its far larger base in the rural areas, the Unionist Party came in for the most pointed attack. Though the Unionists relied less on public meetings than behind-the-scenes politicking, no party had done more significant damage to the political unity of Muslims in the League's eyes than they. 'Our primary enemy,' Jinnah called them; they were not really a party at all, he said, but 'backers of *naukarshahi* (oppressive bureaucratic rule),' thus suggesting a close connection between the Unionists and the structure of colonial rule.²⁶ By their opposition to Jinnah at the Simla conference, they had undercut the Muslim League's all-India organization and created confusion and conspiracies.²⁷ In the interest of ministries and political power, they had divided Muslims in the Punjab in every possible way. They made common cause with 'bigoted sectarians and Mahasabhis,' one poster noted, implying a link between internal Muslim division and the threat of Hindu domination. They supported divisions of *qaum*, *biradari*, and tribe. 'Their Muslim members have no thought of the welfare of the ten crore Muslims of India,' one flyer said, 'but only see dreams of power (*hukumat*).'²⁸ They symbolized the connection between the oppressive structure of rural political

²⁵ Flyer no. 5 (SC): '*Kangres tahiyya kar chuki he ki Muslim Lig aur Musalmanon ka kuchal den.*' Emphasis in original.

²⁶ Flyer no. 27 (LC): '*Yaum-i hisab a rahi he.*'

²⁷ Flyer no. 3 (SC): '*Yunyanist Parti yun hi kahti he.*' The Simla conference was called in June 1945 by the Viceroy Lord Wavell, to reconstitute the Viceroy's Executive Council as a step toward the transfer of power. Jinnah blamed Punjab's Unionist Muslims for conspiring with the Viceroy and the Congress to gain separate representation and undermine the Muslim League's claim to all the Muslims on the Council, a claim which led to the conference's failure.

²⁸ Flyer no. 32 (LC): '*Wizarat! Wizarat! Wizarat! Yunyanist Parti ki ek hi rat.*'

power under the old regime and the appeal to the myriad narrow loyalties that divided Muslims. Indeed, the Muslim League presented the Unionists as a grave threat to unity precisely because the Unionists' position dramatized the ways that the system of colonial state power itself had fostered both oppression and the manifold divisions that had beset the politics of the Muslims.

Muslim League rhetoric thus helped to create an image of Pakistan as the antithesis of that power, as the embodiment of a community that transcended politics, indeed, that was defined in opposition to the noise and confusion of political divisions. Separate electorates in fact fostered this appeal. The structure of the electoral arena defined the tension between the image of a fixed, objectively defined Muslim community (defined by separate electorates), and the reality of electoral conflict *among* Muslims themselves. The image of unity to which the Muslim League appealed—and which justified its claim to Pakistan—fed off this tension and thus drew, in an important sense, on the very structure of the colonial electoral arena itself.

But the power of this appeal was heightened by the fact that it drew also from religious discourse of Muslim self-definition with deep historical roots, a discourse in which Muslim identity was a product not just of colonial definitions but of individual moral commitment. The unity that the League called for was in fact configured in opposition not only to the political divisions created by parties like the Ahrar and Unionists but also to the more fundamental danger of *fitna*, the general disordering of the community (in a way that could potentially prevent Muslims from living fulfilled religious lives). In playing on 'tribal feeling' (*qaba'ili asabiyat*), for example, the Unionist Party was guilty, in the language of the League's rhetoric, not just of creating division, but of encouraging a return to '*fitna-i jahiliyat*', the moral disorder of the era of ignorance before the coming of Islam.²⁹ Indeed, the danger of *fitna* lay in the fact that it was not just a product of the activities of parties like the Ahrar and the Unionists but was potentially ever-present in Punjabi Muslim life, in the pull of family, genealogy, custom, and other parochial loyalties. Support for Pakistan, as a symbol of unity, was thus all the more critical (and, as some posters suggested, obligatory), if Muslims were to confront the moral danger.

²⁹ Ibid.

Several Muslim League posters thus focused directly and powerfully on the danger that surrounded Muslims and on how support for Pakistan was essential to their lives, precisely because it was a symbol that transcended everyday divisions. One flyer ticked off the snares Muslims would have to escape as they came to support Pakistan: 'Come,' the poster declared, 'leave personalities; leave caste and tribal divisions (*zat pat*); break all parties, all factions, all snares one by one.'³⁰ It was against this backdrop, and in opposition to this world that support for Pakistan took on meaning. 'The enemies of the Muslims are two,' one poster declared, making no mention of the Congress, the Unionists, or any other party, but focusing only on the everyday foundations of human division: 'Color and genealogy (*rang o nasab*), that is, the *fitna* of tribes and biradaris,' and 'country and homeland (*mulk o watan*), that is, the idol (*but*) of *qaumiyat* and *wataniyat*.' The one was provoked by the scramble for power; the other ('the *fitna* of the separation of religion and politics') by the struggle for India's independence. But only the realization that all honor derived ultimately from Islam could save the Muslims.

Muslims! Break the idols of *rang o nasab* and *qaum o watan*. Your honour (*izzat*), the honour of your *biradari* and tribe, the honour of your family, all are from the honour of Islam and the Muslims. Deserving of honour is that Muslim, that tribe, that *biradari*, that family that pushes forward in the service of Islam and Muslims. With this purpose the Muslim League has risen up; for this purpose the Pakistan demand is being made.³¹

Only Pakistan, in other words, could symbolically tame these divisive loyalties. *Fitna*, otherwise, loomed. 'Islam does not accept genealogical (*nasli*) and geographical (*watani*) distinctions,' another flyer exhorted. 'Do not provoke the *fitna* of *biradari* and *qaum*,' it continued. 'Unite on Islam. Become One.'³²

The support of religious leaders, leading ulama and *masha'ikh* (sufis), underlined the religious character of this appeal. Several flyers reproduced statements of ulama and *pirs* in

³⁰ Flyer no. 8 (SC): 'Ao.'

³¹ Flyer no. 36 (LC): '*Yun to Saiyid bhi ho, Mirza bhi ho, Afghan bhi ho, tum sabhi kuch ho, batao to Musalman bhi ho.*'

³² Flyer no. 2 (SC): '*Sab Musalman bhai bhai hain.*'

support of the Muslim League, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups. For the ulama, of course, the equation of Pakistan with Islamic unity was complicated by the fact that many in opposition to the Muslim League were also ulama who themselves used religious arguments to support their position. These ulama saw the movement for Pakistan as a threat to religious law (*shariat*), since the leaders of the Muslim League were primarily Anglicized Muslims with little history of commitment to *shariat*.³³ But the pro-League ulama quoted in these posters explained the attitudes of these anti-Pakistan ulama as misguided, a product of the entrapments of false loyalties and politics. As Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi stated (in a flyer reproducing a previously-published statement by the late *alim*), those ulama who opposed the League were of two kinds. Some, he noted, were simply popular authors rather than true men of religion. Others were learned, madrasa-educated ulama, but they were so caught up in opposition to the British (and consequent support of the Congress) that they had come to exceed religious (*shar'ī*) limits in an almost mystical intoxication with the Congress (*fana fi'l Kangres*). They had, in other words, like early mystics, compromised the community by their self-absorbed inattention to the law and to community consensus. If the leaders of the Muslim League needed to be reformed, Thanawi continued, then they were at least far more worthy of reform (*qabil-i islah*) than the leaders of the Congress.³⁴

In another poster, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, the leader of the pro-Pakistan Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam, stressed Islamic unity yet more powerfully. For Usmani, nothing was more central to Islamic order than unity. 'For Muslims to be agreed and unified on a true purpose is a magnificent gift,' he said. He illustrated this with the story of Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron) and the golden calf from the Quran.

³³ For a brief account of the opposition of the ulama of the Jamiyat-i Ulama-yi Hind to the Muslim League and Pakistan at this time, see Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 243–6.

³⁴ Flyer no. 6 (LC): 'Kalimat al-Haq.' The phrase '*fana fi'l-Kangres*' is a pun on the mystical phrase '*fana fi'llah*' or 'annihilating the self in the contemplation of God'. Here they are accused of annihilating themselves (and the community) in the Congress. Thanawi, perhaps the leading *alim* of Deoband in his generation, had died in 1943.

When Musa left the Bani Israel in the desert to receive God's covenant, they soon became lost in cow worship (*gosala parasti*). Musa's brother, Harun, pleaded with them to stop. When they ignored his advice, Harun did nothing to stop them. On returning, Musa was furious and demanded of Harun why he had failed to stop such idolatry.

Harun's response was telling: 'I was worried that you would blame me if I caused division without waiting for your word.' The danger of division in the *qaum* was so serious, Usmani remarked pointedly, that Harun had put it even above the suppression of idolatry. This message, for Usmani, was at the heart of Pakistan. The implicit criticism of those who attacked Pakistan with narrow sectarian arguments was clear. Through good fortune, God had brought Muslims together on the Muslim League platform, under the green crescent flag, and 'the Pakistan idea had taken hold of Muslim minds and hearts.' Muslim voters should thus recognize well at this time their *qaumi farz*, taking no heed of social pressure, greed, personality or connection—of all the sources of division that surrounded them. 'Becoming all of one heart and one voice, they should raise the Pakistan slogan.'³⁵

Pronouncements from sufis in the Muslim League's flyers generally employed similar language. Sufi *pirs* played a prominent role in the Muslim League election campaign in the Punjab, and the collected exhortations of prominent *pirs* appeared on several posters.³⁶ Some of these appealed directly to the *murids* (disciples) of particular *pirs* to support the Muslim League and Pakistan. One flyer, for example, printed an appeal from Ajmer (with a seal at the top) directed not only to the 'Ahl-i Islam', but also 'to the *murids* and *khwajagan* (masters) of the Chishti *silsila* (order) especially,'

³⁵ Flyer no. 1 (LC): '*Ek khadim-i din ka paigham Musalmanan-i Panjab o Sirhad ke nam.*' Like Thanawi, Usmani was also associated with Deoband.

³⁶ See, for example, the collected statements of prominent *pirs*, some quite similar, in Flyer no. 1 (SC): '*Hazrat sufiya-i karam ka ailan-i haq: Sirf Muslim Lig ki himayat karo.*' *Pirs* whose statements were included on this flyer were: Saiyid Al-i Rasul Ali Khan of Ajmer Sharif; Pir Ladle Husain Shah, *sajjada nishin* of Gulbarga Sharif; Khwaja Ghulam Sadiduddin, *sajjada nishin* of Taunsa Sharif; the *sajjada nishin* of Pakpattan Sharif (name not given); Shah Ghulam Mohiuddin, *sajjada nishin* of Golra Sharif; Shah Muhammad Qamaruddin, *sajjada nishin* of Sial Sharif; Pir Saiyid Jamaat Ali Shah of Alipur; and Saiyid Fazal Shah of Jalalpur Sharif.

stating that it was their duty to support Jinnah and the Muslim League.³⁷ In a few others, the particularity of the *piri-muridi* bond was invoked, with appeals by *pirs* to their *biradarani tariqat* (brothers of the sufi order) to support the Pakistan cause. We know from other evidence that some *pirs* made personal tours among their *murids* and used the yearly ‘*urs* (saint’s death anniversary) at their shrines to appeal for votes. But the language of most *pirs* in these posters replicated the more general appeal to Muslim unity that suffused the language of the pro-Pakistan ulama as well. As Saiyid Muhammad Fazal Shah declared in one poster, reproducing a statement delivered to his followers at the Jalalpur shrine, their primary duty was to support the Muslim League as the embodiment of Islamic unity. Doubtless, he noted, some Muslim parties had refused to join the Pakistan movement. As the leader of his own sufi organization (called *Hizbullah*), he too might have directed his followers to stand for election on his own ticket, thus strengthening his organization’s influence. But this would only have weakened Islamic unity (*wahdat-i Islami*) and the organization of the community (*nizam-i milli*). Instead, he said, the *masha’ikh* and *sajjada nishins* were united in their support for the Muslim League, and this support would, God willing, stand as a surety for the Pakistan cause.³⁸

The emphasis on order and unity—in opposition to disorder, everyday division, and *fitna*—was thus critical in providing the framework within which the religious and political aspects of the Muslim League campaign were conjoined. Unity, of course, represented a powerful political appeal. It provided a basis on which the Muslim League could claim organizational loyalty and discipline in its battle with other political parties. It was critical to Jinnah’s public posture as the ‘sole spokesman’ for the entire, census-defined Muslim community, a posture Ayesha Jalal has carefully chronicled in political terms, and for his ability to exercise effective influence in negotiations with the Congress and the British.³⁹ But the discourse of unity, as these flyers show, had another side as well, rooted not in

³⁷ Flyer no. 7 (LC): ‘*Ghulam Murtaza Shah Ajmeri al-Pakpattani . . . ka ailan-i haq.*’

³⁸ Flyer no. 4–5 (LC): ‘*Amir-i Hizbullah ka ailan.*’

³⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Jinnah's high-level constitutional calculation but in a rhetoric of Islamic moral order and *fitna* that resonated widely among many Muslims. The vision of unity—and of Jinnah as 'sole spokesman'—had a cultural meaning precisely because it linked Muslim politics to an old religious rhetoric of Muslim communal self-definition that fed on the tension between unity and the *fitna* of pervasive party, tribal and family division. In this discourse, the election victory of the Muslim League (and the ratification of Jinnah's position as 'sole spokesman') meant the triumph of a religious image of community, which, at least in the rhetoric of these posters, focused symbolic religious meaning on Jinnah, the Muslim League, and Pakistan. The joining of these images in the electoral arena was, arguably, critical for the League's claim to be the vanguard of a mobilized nation.

But the electoral arena also proved critical in shaping the image of a nation in another way, and that was by linking the image of Pakistan to a distinctive image of the relationship between the individual and community. Defined structurally as an arena of public competition, the electoral arena encouraged, on one level, strong oppositional language and the submergence of the individual in the larger community. It encouraged the depiction of the League's opponents as enemies of the community in a great electoral battle. The attempt to delegitimize the political opponents of the Muslim League as agents of *fitna* was linked in some of the posters to the portrayal of the election as a 'war of life and death' for the Muslim community, in which their religion obliged all Muslims to participate. Muslims, as one poster put it, were engaged in a constitutional war, a war not of guns, ditches, and bullets but of votes, a war in which the life and death of India's Muslims was at stake.⁴⁰ It was 'every Muslim's duty' (*farz*) in this 'war of Pakistan' (*jang-i Pakistan*), another declared, 'to be with the Muslim League.'⁴¹ Such language suggested the importance of obedience and acceptance of authority, and of sacrifice, in shaping the individual's relationship to the community at this critical time. Unity in this construction implied obedience to the community's will.

⁴⁰ Statement of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. Flyer no. 2 (LC): '*U1ama aur masha'ikh-i Islam ki apil.*'

⁴¹ Quote of Shah Muhammad Qamaruddin, *sajjada nishin*, Sial Sharif. Flyer no. 1 (SC): '*Hazrat sufiya-yi karam ka ailan-i haq: Sirf Muslim Lig ki himayat karo.*'

But on another level, the structure of the electoral arena encouraged another, very different image of the individual that was also to prove central to the image of Pakistan that the League created. Though calling forth a rhetoric of conflict and sacrifice, the electoral arena was framed by specific legal and bureaucratic rules that defined a relationship between the individual and the community far different from that implied by the metaphor of battle. While the form of elections, as well as the League's emphasis on total unity, encouraged the mobilization of Muslims in obedience to religiously sanctioned leaders, colonial election law specifically barred appeals to divine sanction in winning votes. This was, in fact, consistent with the flat definition of religious community embodied in separate electorates: to be classified as a Muslim for this purpose did not require submission to God's will but simply recognition as a Muslim under census definitions. Whatever the rhetoric of religious obedience, therefore, the law technically protected voters against any form of coercion or 'undue influence' that compromised the free exercise of their wills. The conflation in League rhetoric of the emphasis on unity with the subordination of the individual will to a divinely sanctioned community was thus, in theory at least, limited by the legal structure of the electoral arena itself. Indeed, to the extent that the Muslim League employed such rhetoric in the 1946 election campaign, it was open to the League's opponents to challenge it in election petitions. A number of these petitions were filed following the balloting. Though few such petitions were upheld, their filing nevertheless suggests the degree to which the language of the campaign was potentially in tension with the bureaucratic and legal framework of the election process itself. This tension in fact flared to the surface at several points during the campaign.⁴²

⁴² Most of the election petitions filed charged the corrupt electoral practice of spiritual 'undue influence' (particularly by *pirs*). Conflict over this corrupt electoral practice flared during the election campaign itself, when a *pir* was arrested for corrupt electoral rhetoric. This galvanized a protest by League leaders, who portrayed this as an attempt to use government influence to silence the message of the League. In the end, few of the election petitions were ruled on before being rendered moot by partition. For a discussion of these issues, see Chapter 7.

But in spite of such tension, the structure of colonial election law had another more powerful influence in shaping the League's rhetoric and in helping to define an image of community that was rooted simultaneously in Islamic paradigms and in the legal assumptions underlying the electoral arena itself. Whatever the emphasis in some League posters on obedience to the community, the image of the autonomous, individual voter, an image central to colonial election law, also found a vital place *within* League electoral rhetoric. With the threat of *fitna* in the background, many League posters in fact looked to the exercise of free *choice* by voters, rather than to any blind obedience to religious authority, as the symbolic antidote to the division and disorder associated with colonial rule and the Unionist Party's power. Several flyers thus portrayed voter resistance to coercion both from the government and from powerful local leaders as critical to the creation of Pakistan. Voters might have to face many difficulties, Jinnah declared in one poster, but they should let no impediments deter them. 'Go,' he said, 'and vote according to the voice of your own conscience (*zamir*); give your vote without fear to those candidates to whom you *want* to give your vote.'⁴³ In several posters, the League stressed that electoral law itself protected the right of voters to exercise free will; the League even published the official Punjab election rules to make this clear.⁴⁴ Government officers 'could not tell voters for whom they should give their votes,' one poster declared, whatever their position. '*Asamidar, khatadar, mazdur, kisan, nambardar, safedposh, zaildar, inamdar, jagirdar, sarpanch*'—the poster ticked off the petty positions and sociological distinctions that lay at the root of a structure of rural power and bureaucratic influence that had divided Punjabis and facilitated Unionist rule. But the power of an election to transform this structure was simple. In elections, the

⁴³ Flyer no. 28 (LC): '*Musalman votaron ka farz: paidal chal kar bhi vot den.*' Emphasis added.

⁴⁴ Flyer no. 31 (LC): '*Muslim Ligi ummidwar aur musalman votar ghaur se parhen.*' See also, Flyer no. 43–44 (LC): '*Nawab Mamdot, Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Daultana, Sardar Shaukat Hayat aur Raja Ghazanfar Ali ki apil Musalmanan-i Panjab se (intikhabat se pahle).*'

poster declared, 'these people are all free (*azad*). They may vote as they wish.'⁴⁵

In giving a critical place to individual will in the construction of the community, these League posters thus transformed the meaning of community will. Though many posters stressed obedience to a leader and to a '*wahid numayanda jama`at*' that embodied the will of the community, the community's will was here imagined as a product of the internalized, transformative Islamic commitments of individual voters themselves, who committed themselves 'heart and soul (*dil o jan*)', even in the face of obstacles and oppression, to vote for the Muslim League and Pakistan. By implication, their support came not from subservient obedience to a leader but from their own selfrealization and transformation, from an activation of their personal passion of faith (*jazba-i iman*), sense of community honour (*ghairat-i milli*), and determination and steadfastness (*azm o istiqlal*), as one poster put it. This could hardly annihilate the world of family, *biradari* and interest that shaped everyday life; indeed, the repeated references to this world in the posters suggest its ongoing presence. But it could create an image of a community that transcended this world (and was defined in fact by its opposition to it) and which would be acted out in the open, free, and political arena of a great, public election contest. While the political boundaries of the community were shaped by the fixed census definitions used for separate electorates used for the census, the election *process* itself here created the community's will. The electoral arena transformed the meaning of community by turning an old language of inner religious commitment into the foundation for a political community created by the voluntary actions of individual, and theoretically equal, Muslim voters. The call, as this flyer concluded, was for Pakistan's lion-hearted (*sherdil*) men to advance with full confidence and peace (*sakun, itminan, amn o aman*, the same peace, it should be noted, that

⁴⁵ Flyer no. 30 (LC): '*Dehati bhai yad rakhen—koi sirkari afisar ap ko majbur nahin kar sak-ta.*' *Asamidar* and *khatadar* are terms for holders of different types of land rights; *mazdur* and *kisan* refer to workers and peasants; *nambardar*, *safedposh*, and *zaildar* refer to rural officeholders; *in`amdar* and *jagirdar* are holders of government-granted lands or revenue concessions; *sarpanch* is the head of a *panchayat*, or local council.

arises from personal religious fulfilment) to cast their ballots for the Muslim League.⁴⁶

A telling indicator of the importance of this symbolic, public acting out of Muslim community in the League's rhetoric lay in its attempt to link this campaign also to the yearly cycle of Muslim ritual, particularly to the traditional Muslim commemoration of the martyrdom of Husain on the 10th of Muharram. In 1945, the 10th Muharram fell in early December, less than two months before the 1946 election; and two of the Muslim League posters focused directly on it. Every year, as one flyer noted, the day of commemoration of the martyrdom of Husain was a 'day of offering tears of love (*muhabbat*) and belief (*aqidat*) in the court of Husain,' a day which, as one poster said, makes 'fresh the ideals of sacrifice, purity and *haq parasti* (truth obsession) of Husain.' At Muharram this public, yet intensely personal, profession of 'love and belief' represented, in effect, a yearly ritual reassertion of the ideals defining the community—even if, in this case, the enactment lasted only a day.⁴⁷ But this ritual now provided a model for the sort of evocation of community that marked the Pakistan campaign. 'History,' the poster said, 'repeats itself,' and the Pakistan campaign was to repeat the paradigmatic struggle at Karbala. Just as the enemies of the community had offered *inams* (revenue-free lands) and offices to divide the community in the time of Husain, so now the community's enemies offered for the same purpose the enticements of *jagirs*, *inams* and squares of land. They were busy in conspiracies. But 'the tenth of Muharram opens the eyes of the Muslims,' the flyer declared. 'The mention of Husain *pak* (the pure) warms faithful hearts. Having trampled underfoot every worldly greed, incitement and fear, Muslims are arrayed in an Islamic army under the Islamic flag.' 'Our pure exemplar' at Karbala, the poster declared, provided them a model.⁴⁸ Through the evocation of the Karbala model, the Muslim League's rhetoric thus evoked the public, ritual recreation of community that marked the 10th Muharram. even as it did so in the very political arena of electoral politics.

⁴⁶ Flyer no. 41 (LC): '*Dushman bhag raha he.*'

⁴⁷ Or, more commonly, for a 10-day period, which culminated on the tenth Muharram.

⁴⁸ Flyer no. 24 (LC): '*Ashura-i Muharram aur Musalmanon ka farz.*' See also Flyer no. 25 (LC): '*Hadisa-i Karbala ka abdi sabaq.*'

Rituals such as Muharram operated in counterpoint, of course, to everyday life. And in critical respects, so did the rhetoric of the Pakistan movement. The critical opposition between the unity of the community, on the one hand, and the danger of social, religious and political division, of *fitna*, on the other, had its own profound roots in the long history and rhetoric of Muslim community, even as it came to have powerful resonance within the conflicted politics of 20th-century Punjab. But, as in ritual, it was through the turning of autonomous individual ‘hearts and minds’ toward transcendent symbols of divinity that this division was periodically transcended. The image of Pakistan and the community was rhetorically constructed in these posters as existing in the hearts and minds of Punjab’s Muslims, who were, as voters, both individuals with a legal status defined by the state, and bearers of an old tradition of Islamic values. In fearlessly attaching their hearts and minds to symbols of community (Jinnah, Pakistan, the Muslim League) through the public act of voting, these voters were performing simultaneously both a constitutional and a symbolic, self-defining act. It was in this sense that the elections defined Jinnah, that austere master of the modern ‘game of constitutional haggling,’⁴⁹ as not only a symbol of united community but also an object of the most profound personal and individual-attachment and love: our ‘*mahbub* (beloved) Quaid-i Azam,’ as one poster put it.⁵⁰

The rhetoric of the Muslim League’s 1946 election flyers raises, in the end, critical questions about the emergence and meaning of Muslim nationalism as a foundation for the emergence of Pakistan. Viewed against the backdrop of Muslim intellectual debate, the language of the League’s election posters was highly ambiguous. While one poster linked the phrase ‘*Islami qaumiyyat*,’ which might reasonably be translated as ‘Islamic nationalism’, to the creation of

⁴⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 173.

⁵⁰ Flyer no. 3 (LC): ‘*Shaikh al-masha’ikh Hazrat Diwan Saiyid Al-i Rasul Ali Khan, sajjada nishin . . . ka paigham Musalmanan-i Panjab aur subah Sirhad ke nam.*’

Pakistan, there was little consistency in this usage.⁵¹ In several posters, *qaum* and *qaumiyat* were used in a negative manner, suggesting loyalties in clear opposition to the unity of the Muslim community. In other posters, the Muslim community (as the foundation for the establishment of Pakistan) was designated by a variety of terms including *qaum*, *millat*, and *ummat*. There emerges from these posters neither a clear, fixed definition of Muslim nation, nor, even, of Muslim community.

The dynamic of community definition in the rhetoric of these election posters nevertheless bears a strong resemblance to nationalist rhetoric as it has been analyzed in other contexts. Perhaps most noteworthy was the *simultaneous* appeal in much of the League's rhetoric to community solidarity on the one hand and to individual autonomy on the other. This linking of community solidarity and individual autonomy is also found in Benedict Anderson's formulation, in which nationalism arises from the interaction of the free imaginations of individuals and an expanding print culture. In this respect at least, the Pakistan movement departed from Anderson's model, for, whatever else it may have been, the imagined Muslim community that emerges from these posters was not primarily a community of readers, each simultaneously (and privately) reading his or her morning newspaper or novel and imagining himself or herself as part of a common nation. Reading and printing certainly played a prominent part in the discourse of Muslim community self-definition in 20th-century India, shaping the emergence of the concept of Pakistan; but they were not solely responsible for creating the contours of an imagined political community that could encompass the footsoldiers (to use the military metaphor) of the community's struggle in the Punjab.

Still, the structure that shaped the Muslim League's campaign of 1946 *did* eventually encompass many of these footsoldiers but in a way entirely ignored by Anderson—through voting. Though only a minority of Muslims could actually vote, it was through the incorporation of the image of the autonomous voter into the image of the Muslim community (rather than through the incorporation of the

⁵¹ Flyer no. 2 (SC): '*Sab Musalman bhai bhai hain.*' As another poster put it, the Muslims 'accept no other *qaumiyat* besides Islam.' Flyer no. 37 (LC): '*Farmuda-i Iqbal.*'

image of the private, autonomous reader) that Jinnah and the Muslim League imagined in 1946 a community of autonomous individuals who encompassed all of Punjab's politically salient Muslims. Voters, after all, had, by legal assumption, their own private, individual (and equal) consciences. Though we do not know what went through the minds of Punjab's thousands of voters as they cast their ballots, it was, in the League's rhetoric at least, the mass, yet individual, act of voting that was critical to the created image of a political community that could be identified with the concept of Pakistan.

The history of these elections suggests in another sense the structural importance of the election process for the articulation of colonial Muslim nationalism. Prasenjit Duara has noted the 'ambivalence about the historicity of the nation' that has marked much modern nationalism. Conceived of simultaneously as both ancient and modern, most nations have faced profound contradictions in their articulations of identity.⁵² Such ambiguities certainly marked the image of Pakistan, whose foundations were rooted both in colonial sociology and in the classical, paradigmatic history of Islamic community. But an examination of the electoral process suggests how these conflicting conceptions came to be significantly reconciled and brought together. In the context of elections, the Muslim community was simultaneously a product of modern, bureaucratic census definitions, which (along with certain property and educational qualifications) conferred the right to vote in Muslim constituencies, and a product of the public and transformative commitment by individual Muslim voters to powerful and long-standing Islamic symbols. This was reflected even in the evocation in League rhetoric, to focus again on Benedict Anderson's argument, of two differing conceptions of time. Some posters defined a vision of community rooted in linear history, coming to fruition as a product of a series of struggles during the history of colonial rule. Others suggested a community rooted in cyclical history, defining itself by the endless re-

⁵² Prasenjit Duara, 'Historicizing National Identity: Or Who Imagines What and When,' in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds, *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 160–61.

enactment of paradigmatic events like the struggle at Karbala.⁵³ The potential conflicts between these definitions of community, one linked to the bounded structure of the colonial state, the other universal in scope, were hardly erased by the election process, as the subsequent history of Pakistan has suggested. But, as the rhetoric of the Muslim League illustrated, the electoral process provided a structural framework in which they were significantly conflated. Imagination did not operate independently of the structure of politics.

Perhaps most important, however, the League's rhetoric hinged on an opposition between community unity and the disorder and division of everyday politics and everyday life—an opposition, also embedded in the structure of elections, that resonated within the language of Islamic moral community and nationalism alike. '*Zat pat* (caste), *firqabandi* (sectarianism), *dhare* (factions), *bandhan* (blind custom)'—these were the normal stuff of everyday conflict that threatened Punjab's Muslims with moral disordering, or *fitna*.⁵⁴ Only the imagination of a community transcending this disorder, a community symbolized by the notion of Pakistan, could provide a foundation both for moral order and for the establishment of a new state.

But the emphasis on *fitna* pointed toward the most deep-seated tension in the League's appeal. Tension between the ideal of Islamic community and the realities of local political cohesion and influence, as Andre Wink has argued, had long shaped Muslim state building in India. 'While factionalism and *fitna* were the worst of evils,' Wink writes, they had historically proved indispensable to virtually all Muslim state construction. Practical sovereignty had always been predicated on the accommodation of elements of *fitna* in India, even as appeals to universal dominion, rooted in paradigmatic Islamic history, had long shaped the language of Islamic legitimation.⁵⁵

⁵³ Compare, for example, the vision of history in Flyer no. 38 (LC): '*Islami riyasat qa'im hokar rahegi*,' with that in Flyer no. 24 (LC): '*Ashura-yi Muharram aur Musalmanon ka farz*.'

⁵⁴ Flyer no. 39 (LC): '*Ek ho jao*.'

⁵⁵ Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 21–34, 379–88.

The League's own election campaign for Pakistan disclosed this tension clearly. While the League used the structure of colonial elections to construct a rhetorical image of a unified Muslim community, local elections forced the League to operate in a milieu in which the influence of faction, family and connection was pervasive. The structure of elections almost guaranteed this. Some of the League's posters acknowledged this and urged voters to transcend the 'matters of *qaumi* connection, questions of family relations, and disputes of faction' that had always characterized earlier colonial elections.⁵⁶ In practice, even the leaders of the Muslim League recognized the ubiquitous character of local conflicts and made careful use of such divisions in organizing their campaign. Even as it rhetorically attacked family connections and *biradari* voting, the League organized a candidate list that was as sensitive as that of their Unionist opponents to the nuances of family, *biradari* and tribal influence in rural constituencies. Just as the League emphasized personal autonomy, so did pro-League landlords, religious leaders and local influentials—as well as their opponents—use whatever coercive mechanisms were available to them in the attempt to win the elections.⁵⁷ Voters in legal theory may have had autonomous consciences and free imaginations but in reality were, as Muslim League leaders realized only too well, still open in rural Punjab to the influence of kinship, connection, and coercion, even during the 1946 campaign.

Ironically, the very structure of these elections thus seemed to call into being the very danger of *fitna* that the League claimed to oppose. But for the League's supporters, the League's rhetoric was itself an anti-toxin against this danger. The specter of *fitna* during the Pakistan movement lay not in the continued existence of local connections (which the League sought to exploit), but rather in the intrusion of such narrow loyalties into a transcendent public realm of community definition and debate linking the image of the moral individual to the conception of the state. It was the definition and protection of this realm that in fact justified the creation of Pakistan.

⁵⁶ Flyer no. 4-S (LC): '*Amir-i Hizbullah ka ailan.*'

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the League's electioneering in the 1946 campaign, see I.A. Talbot, 'The 1946 Punjab Elections.'

Yet the league's rhetorical emphasis on Muslim unity also provided the foundations for an official version of the meaning of the 1946 elections that was capable of obliterating from public memory the actual operation of political influence in the rural areas (and with it, perhaps, the real subjectivity of rural voters). The rhetoric of the 1946 elections laid the groundwork for an official history of the coming of Pakistan that erased, in the interest of the nation, the conflicts and divisions that had defined the real dynamics of the 1946 election campaign.⁵⁸ In the image of the nation all would be equal, even if in practice—as the conduct of the 1946 elections illustrated—they certainly were not. Seen in this light, the evocation of Muslim nationalism came to justify the power of a state which denied the significance for the nation of the very patterns of particularistic loyalty that had brought it into existence and on which its power continued to depend. This was the paradox of 'unity'. Muslim nationalism provided a cover, in other words, for a state that sought to delegitimize opposition and to operate relatively autonomously of the society from which it in fact drew its power. The political implications of these contradictions for the relationship of state and society have been all too apparent during Pakistan's subsequent history, particularly during its long bouts of martial rule.⁵⁹

Yet this is hardly the whole story. The tensions in the League's position also generated an image of a transcendent national community that, for all its contradictions, was located in the imaginings of individuals themselves. The very tension between the world of everyday power relations on the one hand and the language of personal Islamic commitment on the other—a tension at the heart of Muslim League rhetoric—facilitated the imagining of a transcendent national community rooted not in relationships of power but in

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the manipulation of Pakistani national identity after 1947, see Ayesha Jalal, 'Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (February 1995), pp. 73–89.

⁵⁹ The search of the Pakistan state for foundations of authority autonomous of society has figured prominently in many accounts of Pakistan's history. See, for example, Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

personal attachments (perhaps even by many whose votes in 1946 were determined by more mundane local pressures). Indeed, the process of elections proved critical to this; for the structure of elections dramatized the divisions and conflicts that were embedded in all political life, even as the election *simultaneously* defined a political arena for imagining, in counterpoint, the transcendent unity of an imagined nation. The community imagined in 1946 thus drew on everyday conflict but was the product of an extraordinary public event. Like the commemoration of Karbala and the popular death anniversaries of sufi saints (which also played an important role in the League's campaign), such events had long linked Muslims imaginatively to a larger, if fleeting, vision of universal Muslim community, a vision that was preserved less in the structures of everyday life than in ritual and memory. In 1946, League rhetoric sought to activate such images, drawing the 'hearts and minds' of Punjabis toward Pakistan as a symbol of universal community, while using the constitutional structure of the election process to transform it into the foundation for a state and a nation.

This is perhaps why the rhetoric of the posters was pervaded by an appeal, not so much to the realm of interest (where most voters continued to be enmeshed in local structures of influence), as to the notion of individual commitment and attachment. Nothing captured this better than the poem at the top of the poster titled, 'An appeal to Punjabi Assembly voters from the ulama and *masha'ikh* of Islam', a verse from Iqbal:

*Sitaron se age jahan aur bhi hain
Abhi ishq ke imtihan aur bhi hain*

[Beyond the stars there are still more worlds
Now there are still more tests of love]⁶⁰

As the embodiment of a transcendent, and in some ways unreachable, ideal, Pakistan was imagined in sharp counterpoint to the inescapable, down-to-earth realities of power and everyday life. To be united in even imagining such an ideal, was, as Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani put it, not an expression of interest, but 'a magnificent

⁶⁰ Flyer no. 2 (LC): '*Ulama aur masha'ikh-i Islam ki apil.*'

gift'. It created the image of a people united in an ineffable 'test of love'. But this vision of community was acted out in 1946 within the legal structures that defined the electoral arenas of the modern colonial state. Within the election process, this vision was shaped simultaneously by old Islamic paradigms, British census definitions, interactions with local loyalties and economic divisions, and the vision of the autonomous voter (or citizen) so important for the evolving legal structure of the modern state. It is in this intersection that we need to look for the meaning of, and the tensions within, Muslim nationalism—and perhaps within the definition of nationalism itself.

A Networked Civilization?

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in scholarly interest in networks. The modern revolution in information technology has given rise to new forms of social, political, and economic organization that are increasingly independent of state control. Emblematic of this transformation, of course, has been the rise of the internet, which has called into existence a dense network of communication largely unconstrained by national boundaries. Interest in the internet has spurred a new wave of social analysis focusing on networks and on their potential to transform the world's social organization in the new, global 'information age'.

Indeed, the network has become, for many, the central metaphor for understanding the contemporary age. This preoccupation with networks has only been accelerated by popular reactions to the dramatic events of 11 September 2001. As one newspaper columnist noted in the wake of 11 September, the spread of 'global terrorism' dramatized the critical need to understand networks and their importance in the modern world.¹ To help us in this, he directed our attention to a recent study by two scholars for the Rand Corporation who have argued that the 'network form' of social organization is 'on the rise in a big way,' fuelled by new forms of communication and 'deeply affecting all realms of society.' With networks, or 'webs of dispersed, interconnected "nodes",' on the ascendant, both 'global civil society' and 'uncivil society' had begun to gain increasing power 'relative to state and market actors,' a trend likely only to accelerate in

¹ David Ignatius, 'A Netwar Clash,' *Washington Post*, 7 October 2001.

the future. 'Netwar,' or conflict focused on the operation of networks, they suggest, could well be the wave of the future.²

Given the events of 11 September, such interest in the 'network form' has particular resonance, of course, for writing and research on contemporary Islam. Worldwide Muslim networks, whose spread has been facilitated by migration, print, and, most recently, by the internet, have been the subject of increasing scholarly investigation. But the use of the network as a metaphor for understanding the dynamics of Islamic history and Islamic civilization is hardly new, and long predates 11 September and the development of the internet. The pivotal importance of this metaphor for understanding Islamic societies was, in fact, clearly argued in the 1970s by Ira M. Lapidus, who noted how differing root metaphors had long been used by scholars to make sense of different world civilizations.

Lapidus underlined the importance of the network metaphor for understanding the Islamic world by contrasting it with the root metaphors that had been commonly used by scholars to analyze the civilization of China. The critical root metaphors for the analysis of Chinese civilization, Lapidus argued, were those of hierarchy and balance. The notion of society as defined by the 'balanced tension' of opposites lay at the heart of the ways in which historians and philosophers had long tried to make sense of the structure of Chinese civilization. This notion shaped standard analyses not only of the Chinese state, but also of that central cultural figure of Chinese civilization, the Confucian sage, who, as Lapidus puts it, was seen by many to balance 'both the tensions and the unity of state and society' in his own soul. Though China was marked by a variety of social organizations and considerable internal conflict, the dominant 'image of Chinese society which emerges in the historiography,' he suggested, was that of 'a mobile,' trembling in balance. 'Though in constant movement, the mobile as a whole floats gracefully, a complete form, a harmonious totality, assuming innumerable variant configurations without loss of its inherent unity.' Balance and ordered hierarchy provided the metaphorical frameworks, in other words, that, in spite of its internal divisions, tensions, and conflicts, allowed

² John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 1996), pp. 17–18, 23–24, 33–34, 53–54.

scholars, Confucian and otherwise, to forge a civilizational image of China as a whole.³

This image contrasted sharply with the dominant metaphorical image that scholars had formed of Islamic civilization, an image that drew on the concept of networks. Like Chinese states, many Islamic states, such as the Abbasids or Ottomans, had no doubt balanced elite and local authority in the exercise of imperial power, and historians—and Muslims themselves—had thus, at times, also turned to the metaphors of hierarchy and balance to make sense of them.⁴ But more frequently in Islamic history, state and society were only weakly integrated. The moral influence wielded by the religious establishment, with its sometimes extensive geographical connections, was often largely independent of the state, while in many Islamic polities, society was far more ‘segmented and inchoate’ than was the case in China. ‘Coalitions, alliances, and social cooperation motivated by common interests and fortified by religious and sometimes political norms’ were the critically defining features of medieval Islamic politics, and many historians thus made sense of these societies only by projecting ‘an image of society as a network of relationships between component groups.’ Rather than the linchpin of a balanced hierarchical order as in China, the state in these Muslim societies was often best understood as simply one of ‘the dense knots where many network lines crossed.’ Networks, rather than ‘an image of society as an architectural or hierarchal structure,’ had thus long provided the dominant metaphor shaping an overarching historical image of Islamic civilization.⁵

Such differences in root, civilizational metaphors were of course, in part, as Lapidus recognized, a product of understandings imposed by

³ Ira M. Lapidus, ‘Hierarchies and Networks: A Comparison of Chinese and Islamic Societies,’ in Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Carolyn Grant, eds, *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 27–31.

⁴ Such a metaphorical vision was in fact embodied, for example, in the ‘Circle of Equity’, a justification for state authority. See Vincent Cornell, ‘Ibn Battuta’s Opportunism: The Networks and Loyalties of a Medieval Muslim Scholar,’ in Bruce Lawrence and Miriam Cooke, eds, *Muslim Networks: From Hajj to Hip Hop* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 31–50.

⁵ Lapidus, ‘Hierarchies and Networks,’ pp. 32–40.

scholars. But these differences were also in many ways intrinsic to cultural self-perceptions among Muslims and Chinese themselves. 'They correspond,' Lapidus wrote, 'to the cultural style and the world view of each civilization,' embodied in art and philosophy as much as in political arrangements. In Islam, the network metaphor thus had roots in 'orthodox Islamic philosophy and theology,' and in Muslim views of the world. Islamic thinkers tended to see the universe as without 'overall pattern,' but rather as a product of God's continual creation and recreation. Islamic arts, he noted, also tended to subordinate inner meaning to form and decorative effect. History, and even 'human life itself,' were thus, in Lapidus's argument, largely conceptualized not in terms of an Islamic structural order, but rather in terms of 'movements and actions correctly performed at each given moment in accord with God's will; in the same way, society is an ever living, never completed network of actions.'⁶ The network metaphor for understanding Islamic societies, he thus argued, had powerful roots in Islamic ideas themselves.

But if Lapidus saw the network image of society as at least partly embedded in the fundamentals of Islamic belief, his argument on the importance of root metaphors was also clearly drawn from the particularities of history. The continuing power of the network in defining an image of Islamic society was pre-eminently rooted in the distinctive, weakly integrated cultural relationship between state and society that he saw as one of the hallmarks of pre-modern Islamic history, whether in the Maghrib, the Middle East, or India. The distinctive patterns of this history have been described by many historians, including Marshall Hodgson, who emphasized the counterpoint in the medieval Muslim world between the militarization of government and 'the relative liberty of the individual, unwilling to subordinate his management of his own fate to superior social institutions or to corporate standards other than the minimum imposed by the Shari'ah law.'⁷ Vincent Cornell underscores this same tension, suggesting how the medieval ulama developed a set of political ideals that crossed the boundaries of particular political systems—and

⁶ Lapidus, 'Hierarchies and Networks,' p. 41.

⁷ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), Vol. II, p. 67.

particular structures of political authority—even as their ideas engaged little with the realities of the ways in which medieval Muslim rulers actually operated.⁸ Not only the connections (and travels) of the ulama, but the persistence of an idealized political vision of Muslim community, transcending the realities of state power, thus defined historically a vision of civilization for which the network metaphor was unusually apposite.

Yet, Lapidus's argument focuses not simply on the pre-modern Muslim world, but on Islamic 'civilization' more broadly as it has survived into more recent times. In part this argument too rested on historical patterns. One might push Lapidus's argument further by suggesting that the network as a root metaphor for Islamic civilization gained all the more vitality in recent centuries due to the history of European colonialism, which encompassed the great majority of Muslim societies in the 19th and 20th centuries, and defined a cultural gulf between state and society far more profound than Muslim societies witnessed in the medieval period. In such circumstances, the network metaphor gave coherence to an encompassing image of Islamic history, rooted not just in medieval historical patterns, but in more modern ones as well. The tension between a moral community, defined by networks, cutting across political systems and political boundaries, and the realities of state power, became in modern times all the more marked.

And yet, the relationship of such a vision to the recent emergence of a world dominated by nation-states remains one that is highly ambiguous. As Cornell notes in his essay, a 'conceptual gulf' separates in many respects the identities and loyalties of the citizens of nationstates from those of the denizens of the networked world inhabited by Ibn Battuta.⁹ Indeed, the bonds of loyalty and identity tying modern citizens to particular homelands and nations appear in certain respects to be antithetical to the bonds that shaped that world. In assessing the contemporary value—and the political implications—of using a network metaphor for understanding Muslim societies and politics, it is thus important to examine the operation of this metaphor in relationship to the patterns of state-society relations that have characterized the more contemporary Muslim past.

⁸ See Vincent Cornell, 'Ibn Battuta's Opportunism,' pp. 31–50.

⁹ Ibid.

This chapter will thus explore the relationship between networks and the construction of one of the first of the post-colonial, national Muslim states of the 20th century, Pakistan. In the process I will speculate on the value of the network metaphor in making sense of the Pakistan movement, focusing in particular on the relationship between networks and modern imaginings of both state and community. What do such modern Islamic movements suggest about the value of maintaining an image of Islam in the modern world as a distinctly ‘networked civilization?’

The Pakistan Movement: Networks and the Image of State and Society

The creation of Pakistan represented an important moment in the history of the Muslim world, for it was a moment that brought into clear focus the modern intersection between Islamic history and the history of the nation-state. Pakistan was established in 1947 as a selfconsciously Muslim state, a state created to give concrete expression to the political aspirations of British India’s large Muslim population. But the movement was laced with ambiguities. In order to assess Pakistan’s relationship to the image of a ‘networked civilization’, this chapter will examine the role of the images of Muslim civilization and Muslim nation that were mobilized in bringing Pakistan into existence—and the contradictions that these engendered.

Indeed, and as we have seen in the preceding chapters, the particular image of the Indian Muslim community that lay behind the Pakistan movement was one that was powerfully shaped in many respects by the distinctive history of British rule in India. The power of the British colonial state, from which Pakistan emerged, rested firmly on a British vision of India as a starkly segmented society, a structure that in British eyes defined India’s social essence. Indians were divided along multiple lines of social cleavage, a fact no less true of India’s Muslims than it was of India’s numerically preponderant population of Hindus. As Mushirul Hasan puts it, ‘Islam in India, past and present, unfolds a bewildering diversity of Muslim

communities.¹⁰ Muslims were organized according to caste and tribe, sufi brotherhood and sect, occupation and neighborhood. Muslim elites of India, like those medieval elites described by Lapidus, were ‘not defined by position in an imperial hierarchy or by any uniform educational or cultural attainment,’¹¹ but variously by family prestige and connection, wealth derived from trade or landholding, educational achievement or, sometimes, by state office holding. These divisions were critical to the structure of colonial rule.

This is not to say that the British, any more than most medieval Muslim states, were oblivious to hierarchy—far from it. Particularly in the decades after 1857, the British made significant efforts to organize their rule around a hierarchy of status gradations, seeking to incorporate the indigenous ‘natural leaders’ of India’s many segmented communities into a graded hierarchy of status at the pinnacle of which was the British Queen and her Indian representative, the Viceroy. Graded titles were thus distributed to many Indian notables, suggesting an ordered relationship to the sovereign. This vision was dramatized through the holding of imperial darbars, adapted from Mughal practice, in which India’s princes and other notables—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh alike—participated in grand spectacles of imperial incorporation and hierarchical ordering.¹²

But this hardly defined for the British, or for most Muslim themselves, an image of the Muslim community as an integrated unit defined and balanced by a hierarchy of status gradations. Proper gradations of status were, no doubt, critically important to the ordering of Muslim society in the localities, and most elite north Indian Muslims saw the maintenance of *sharafat*, or gentility linked to place, lineage, and cultural style, as central to the proper, normatively

¹⁰ Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India’s Muslims Since Independence* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 7.

¹¹ Lapidus, ‘Hierarchies and Networks,’ p. 33.

¹² For a discussion of this, see Bernard Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India,’ in E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 165–210. David Cannadine has also written of this structure, suggesting its importance to the image of empire held by the British themselves. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 46–54.

defined ordering of Islam. But the British state in India was not Muslim, and could play no role in integrating such hierarchies into a unified cultural whole. Quite to the contrary, the British sought self-consciously to separate their state from the cultural integration of Indian society—and from the Muslim community—seeing the colonial state as standing above a society defined by a multiplicity of parochial communities. The separation of the state from society was further reinforced by British attempts in the late 19th century to objectively define and fix indigenous communities through vast ethnographic surveys and through the Indian census. The image of the Muslim community that emerged from this was of a large social community, defined independently both of the state and of structures of power. While this was a community bounded by census definitions of ‘Muslimness’ (which were loosely based on ancestry and culture), it was one with no defining structure of power. Local structures of power of course there were—in abundance—but with no intrinsic relationship to the definition of the Muslim community as a whole, patterns of power based on wealth, kinship, alliance, and patronage defined the workings of Muslim politics under the umbrella of British bureaucratic and military power.

This of course echoed in many respects pre-modern Muslim patterns, as did the images of Muslim community that this structure evoked. With the power of the state structured by non-Islamic principles, local hierarchies of power among Muslims operated in counterpoint to the idealized image of a Muslim community transcending state power, a community defined by pilgrimage, Islamic practice, and imagined genealogical connections to the Middle East and to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. But there was also a crucial difference separating the British colonial state from its medieval Muslim forebears. While the British created a power structure in which lineage and patronage connections were central to local Muslim influence, just as they were in many medieval Muslim societies, the British bureaucracy, and particularly the census, also defined the Muslim community in a new and powerful way—as a reified, bureaucratically defined entity, bounded by the administrative reach of the state itself. Shaped by administrative definitions, the Muslim community in India was a distinctively Indian entity. Perhaps even more important, the census defined an image of the Muslim community as a homogeneous entity in which elite and common

Muslims counted equally. This image represented a sharp break from the networked model that had shaped medieval thinking, and it is little wonder that it generated considerable ferment in Muslim thinking in India.

Among the most noteworthy of those who sought to negotiate the meaning of Muslim community in this new political terrain were the reformist ulama associated with the new religious seminary founded at Deoband in the 1860s. The history of Deoband has drawn considerable attention in recent years, not least because of its links to the late 20th-century emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. But the Deoband movement was in fact complex and varied in its manifestations in British India. On one level, the reformist ulama operated within an intellectual tradition dating back to medieval times. They saw reliance on—and commitment to—the *shariat* as the foundation for the imagining of an idealized political community transcending the structures of political power supporting the state. But at the same time, they also disclosed a heightened concern with the actions and behavior of common Muslims as part of an imagined Muslim community that was shaped, at least in part, by the colonial state's definition of an enumerated and administratively bounded Indian Muslim community. It was not enough for the ulama to imagine themselves as part of elite moral networks cutting across worldly structures of political power—as had been the case with many of the medieval ulama. Given the structure of the colonial state, with its ability to bureaucratically conjure the existence of religious communities encompassing elite and common people alike, the Deobandi ulama also developed an important commitment to spreading a sense of moral community—and of commitment to *shariat*—among the common people themselves.¹³

To understand the tensions that this generated in the metaphorical image of a networked Muslim community, these developments must be seen in relation to another critical development associated with colonial rule in India—the emergence of a new public realm of print and publication. This was an arena defined largely by its independence of the state. The Deobandi ulama, for example, though still organized in part by connections of personal allegiance and discipleship,

¹³ For a description of the development of the Deobandi ulama, see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

increasingly came to rely in the late 19th century on published tracts, treatises, and printed *fatwas* in Urdu, to draw their dispersed nodes of teaching and influence into a larger framework of common moral imaginings linked to a universalistic vision of Islam. In allowing the ulama to reach a larger and more varied audience, the emerging realm of print and publication thus allowed them to come to terms, in critical ways, with the new, more reified meaning of Muslim community that had developed within the structure of colonial rule. But it also brought them into dialogue with a far larger cross-section of Indian Muslim opinion. The arena of print was one increasingly shared in late 19th-century India by a wide variety of Muslim leaders (and non-Muslim leaders as well)—commercial newspaper editors, politicians, lawyers and publicists—who used the press to join in debates about the moral meaning of Muslim community in British India.¹⁴ Many of these men had close links to the merchants, lineage leaders, and landed patrons who dominated structures of power under the colonial administration. If the new arena of print offered to the ulama—and to other literate Muslims—opportunities to reach broader audiences and to popularize new images of the Muslim community, it also linked discussions about the nature of Muslim community to the structure of state power in new and complex ways.

Equally importantly, participation in this public arena forced Muslims—ulama and lay Muslims alike—to ground their interpretations of Muslim community in India's segmented cultural milieu. Nowhere was this clearer than in matters of language. In using an indigenous language, Urdu, to spread their message, the ulama demonstrated a concern not just with the universalist claims of Islam, but also with reaching an audience shaped by India's distinctive cultural history.¹⁵ Other Muslim leaders used a wide variety of other

¹⁴ This development of a commercial Urdu press was, of course, only an incipient process in late 19th-century India, but it quickly began to transform the contours of political discourse. For a general discussion of this impact, see Francis Robinson, 'Islam and the Impact of Print in South Asia,' in Nigel Crook, ed., *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History, and Politics* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 62–97.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the relationship between the public development of vernacular languages and changing conceptions of religious community, see

languages, in addition to Urdu, to reach increasingly wide circles of Muslim opinion. Indeed, choice of language was linked to class, region, or to the particular types of political projects that Muslim leaders were engaged in. Debating sometimes in English, sometimes in Urdu, and sometimes in India's many regional languages, Muslims participated in a wide range of political movements, often in alliance with non-Muslim groups. Some joined the Indian National Congress in projecting an image of Indian nationhood that incorporated Indian Hindus and Muslims alike. Others stressed the power of regional identities, whether Tamil, Punjabi, Bengali (or others), to provide access for Muslims to the new arenas of provincial power opening up within the colonial system. If the public realm of print and publication was an arena for the imagining of national communities, as Benedict Anderson argues, it was also a venue for the imagining of many other forms of community.¹⁶ While the new arena of print and publication thus offered new opportunities for imagining a Muslim community that could be conceived as autonomous of the state, it did so in an arena increasingly shaped as well by the many cross-cutting divisions marking colonial India's cultural and political structure.

It was in this context that the old language of moral solidarity, embodied in normative concepts such as *millat* and *ummah*—and in the image of Islam as a networked civilization—took on new public significance in early 20th-century India, and not just for the ulama. On one level, of course, this was a language with deep historical roots suggesting a community that not only transcended structures of state power, but that also transcended regional and linguistic boundaries. But in the context of India's cultural debates, these were concepts that were increasingly deployed not only by the ulama, but also by a wide

the essays in Kenneth W. Jones, ed., *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). This is not to say that the ulama did not also publish in Arabic and attempt to engage with an extra-Indian Muslim community, but publishing in Arabic was swamped by the volume of the ulama's publishing in Urdu. See Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Arabic, the Arab Middle East, and the Definition of Muslim Identity in 20th Century India,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ser. 3, 8/1 (1998), pp. 59–81.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

range of other Muslim leaders who jockeyed for influence and position as spokesmen for Muslim interests within the colonial political system. It was in the face of the many divisions and cross-cutting identities among India's Muslims that these leaders too offered idealized visions of Muslim community as a key to defining an effective voice for Muslims—and for themselves as *Muslim* leaders—within this complex and fragmented cultural and political order.¹⁷

That this should have generated considerable tension should not be a surprise, for the concept of a territorially and culturally grounded Muslim community was one that was in deep tension with the concept of Islamic universality. Indeed, nowhere were the tensions that this generated more clear than in public debate among the ulama themselves. In a world of European colonial domination, the Deobandi ulama had seen the spread of universalistic *shariat*-based standards of personal behaviour among individual men and women as critical to the setting of community boundaries. In searching for a moral definition of community that cut across structures of power, they had thus attacked a wide array of popular, non *shariat* based practices linked to local Indian culture and to local structures of social organization as fundamentally unIslamic.¹⁸ But in the very act of defining universal moral standards, the Deobandis stirred up fierce opposition from those who saw Deobandi reformism as an attack on many of the most distinctive features of Indian Islam. Among the most effective opponents of the Deobandis were the Bareilvi ulama, who coalesced under the influence of Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly in the early 20th century. The Barelvis, no less than the Deobandis, relied on the realm of press and publication to define their own image of community. Indeed, they too saw themselves as reformers, inspired by the image of a Muslim community composed of moral individuals

¹⁷ See Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁸ For a good introduction to many of these concerns, see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). The actual reach of the Deobandi ulama was of course constrained by limited resources, by high levels of rural illiteracy, and by ongoing status prejudices separating the *ashraf* from other Muslims.

guided by networks of ulama. But they bitterly rejected the Deobandis' scripturalist attacks on popular customs associated with sufi shrines and on the popular veneration of the Prophet, customs which the Barelvīs saw as foundational features of Indian Muslim belief and life.¹⁹ Nor were the Deobandis and Barelvīs alone in engaging in increasingly polemical debate in the early 20th century as the realm of print expanded. Such debates encompassed a wide range of Muslims. Sufis too engaged in the active use of print to disseminate their own arguments and views, in the process shaping the meaning of a distinctively Indian Islam embedded in India's cultural life.²⁰

Such controversies were, of course, difficult to resolve and led to considerable soul-searching. But they also pointed the way toward the emergence in the early 20th century of a distinctive form of public rhetoric that sought to transcend such sectarian debates in the quest for new images of Muslim unity. If debates on the nuances of the *shariat* often led the ulama (and others) into bitter controversy, then the key to the assertion of unity in the public realm was, in the eyes of an increasingly important segment of opinion, individual *action* that could transcend such controversy. Nothing focused such action more powerfully in the early 20th century—or suggested the tensions it embodied—than the increasing emphasis on the public defence of Islamic *symbols*. Threats to Islamic symbols—such as the Prophet, the Quran, the mosque—generated a form of highly charged rhetoric in the early 20th-century press that gained a central place in the public sphere. Calls to public sacrifice in the name of those symbols had universal resonance, evoking the participation of Indian Muslims in a universal *ummah*. Actions rooted in the devotion to symbols dramatized the existence of a community rooted in principles that transcended politics—a community defined not by social or political structure, but, as Lapidus puts it, by 'a never completed network of actions.' Yet at the same time, the very processes by which such acts were publicized—within the structure of

¹⁹ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and his Movement, 1870–1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996; new edition, Delhi: Yoda Press, 2010).

²⁰ See Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 190–223.

the press and public debate—grounded them in India’s political culture. If unity lay in individual action, *publicized* action was inevitably performed within the distinctive cultural contours of India’s public sphere.

In the early 20th century, these tensions were played out in India in a series of public campaigns focused on the defence of such Muslim symbols. One of the earliest examples of these campaigns was the Kanpur mosque affair of 1913, an attempt to turn a small neighbourhood mosque in Kanpur (that was ‘martyred’ by British officials to make way for a new road) into a symbol of popular commitment to the Muslim community (see Chapter 6 for details). This was a mosque of no historical or regional significance, but it came to be a symbol of Islam and of community unity precisely because its ‘cause’ was taken up publicly by politicians, poets and newspaper editors as the symbolic cause of the Muslim community as a whole. So important were the protests this engendered that they significantly roiled for some time the politics of north India.²¹ Such also was the case in a later agitation in the Punjab surrounding the publication in the mid-1920s of a Hindu-authored pamphlet entitled *Rangila Rasul*, which defamed the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim leaders used the press and the platform to call on Muslims to make their commitment to the Prophet’s honor public. By protesting this defamation in public meetings and in the press, some Muslims defined an image of community whose touchstone was the individual Muslim’s love and sacrifice for the Prophet, demonstrated through publicized—and sometimes violent—action in the streets of Lahore.²²

Such devotion and sacrifice in the name of Islamic symbols served simultaneously to link individual Muslims to a worldwide *ummah* and to define their participation in a distinctive *Indian* Muslim

²¹ Sandria Freitag, ‘The Roots of Muslim Separatism in South Asia: Personal Practice and Public Structures in Kanpur and Bombay,’ in Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus, eds, *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 119–22.

²² For a brief discussion of the *Rangila Rasul* case, see G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), pp. 40–47; also see Chapter 6, note 38 of the present volume. The protests against the pamphlet in fact culminated in the murder of the pamphlet’s publisher by a Muslim youth.

community—a Muslim community that was increasingly perceived as a player in world politics in its own right. Networks of connections had, of course, long linked South Asian Muslims to the Middle East and Southeast Asia through pilgrimage, networks of travelling ulama, sufi orders, and the flow of religious ideas. But now Muslims used the networks of the press to shape an image of the Indian Muslim community as an imagined collectivity that was itself a participant in a worldwide anti-colonial struggle. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this was the Khilafat movement following World War I. This movement projected the defence of the Ottoman Caliph against encroaching European power as a focus for the devotion and sacrifice of all Muslims, but pre-eminently for those in India, who had witnessed European colonialism first hand. The fact that the Turkish Sultan had no direct political influence or authority in India only rendered the institution of the Khilafat all the more powerful as a pure symbol for Indian Muslim affection.²³ Devotion to the Khilafat thus bound Muslims to the worldwide *ummah* even as it bound them to an imagined *Indian* Muslim community at the same time.

Yet, attempts to translate these symbolic movements into concrete political organization in practice produced widespread frustration. Cooperation by Khilafat movement leaders with anti-British Congress nationalists in the early 1920s, for example, created considerable shortterm enthusiasm, but little in the way of effective organization among Indian Muslims. Nor were subsequent attempts at independent Muslim political organizing in the 1920s and 1930s any more successful. Indeed, the model of a networked moral community transcending territorial structures and ‘earth-bound’ identities (to use Muhammad Iqbal’s phrase), meshed only uneasily with the vision of an Indian Muslim community that could participate in the territorial politics of British India.

But the enthusiasm generated by these campaigns nevertheless proved critical in laying the groundwork for the emergence of a symbolic campaign that ultimately sought to reconcile these contradictions. This was the campaign for Pakistan, which first emerged as an important symbol of Muslim community in the late 1930s. The Pakistan demand—the call, that is, for a separate Indian

²³ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

Muslim state—sought to reconcile a networked vision of Muslim community cutting across worldly structures of power, with the vision of a Muslim community grounded in state structures on the Indian subcontinent. And it did so by seeking, essentially, to re-imagine the state itself. The colonial state, of course, with its hierarchal and bureaucratic structure, was on one level the very antithesis of the vision of community defined by individual devotion to Islamic symbols. But some Muslim leaders increasingly held out in the press and on the public platform in the 1930s and 1940s the image of a newly imagined Muslim state—Pakistan—that would serve both as a symbol of individual Muslim devotion and as a structure for power and rule. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who took over the leadership of the all-India Muslim League in the mid-1930s, embraced the idea of Pakistan in 1940 as the birthright of India's Muslims, who, he now said, constituted a 'nation'. Pakistan represented the rightful claim of India's Muslims to gain power over their own lives and take their place among the world's other 'national' communities. But at the same time he went out of his way to leave Pakistan as vaguely defined as possible, thus emphasizing its power as a symbol of moral community, quite apart from its grounding as a territorial entity. Pakistan was thus presented in the press both as the vehicle for India's Muslims to take their territorial place in the modern world of nation-states, and, simultaneously, as a symbol of devotion for individual participants in the *Islamicumma*.²⁴

In practice, of course, the creation of Pakistan was also marked by sharp contradictions. If Pakistan was a symbol, it meant different things to different people. Tensions in its meaning were heightened by the very vagueness of its territorial character. More importantly, the translation of the Pakistan demand into a political reality required that the Muslim League win elections in India's provinces in order to substantiate its claim to speak for the census-defined Muslim community. This meant trolling for political support within provinces (such as Bengal and Punjab) that had long been influenced by powerful regional Muslim political parties. If the image of Pakistan was the antithesis of colonial political power, winning support

²⁴ Jinnah was himself more concerned with the latter than the former, but he recognized the importance of Pakistan as a symbol in bringing together a variety of different Muslims.

nevertheless meant coming to terms with the local structures of faction and hierarchy that had long defined the structure of power under British colonialism.

That the Muslim League was ultimately successful in this was indicated by its victory in the 1946 provincial elections.²⁵ But this success came ultimately at a high price, for it highlighted the underlying contradictions in Pakistan's various symbolic meanings. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this lay in the attitudes of many of the ulama, who saw the very success of the Muslim League in compromising with colonial structures of power as calling into question Pakistan's meaning as a symbol for Muslim devotion and sacrifice. Many of the leading Deobandi ulama attacked Jinnah and the leaders of the Muslim League as hypocrites, who had let the will to power compromise their commitment to the *ummah*. Using language that echoed the medieval ulama's mistrust of the state, they attacked the movement's leaders as men so deeply enmeshed in the political structures of the colonial system that they had lost any real commitment to Islam. Their criticism in fact highlighted the continuing tension between an image of the community as a territorially grounded nation, and an image of the community as defined by networks, cutting across structures of political power.²⁶

Yet, even among the ulama, there were many for whom Pakistan's symbolic meanings were compelling.²⁷ Whatever the politics of its creation, the Pakistan movement promised to define the presence in India of an imagined community rooted in the devotion of individual Muslims to a powerful symbol of Islam. Though the demand was for a Muslim state, the image of a moral community embodied by Pakistan

²⁵ See I.A. Talbot, 'The 1946 Punjab Elections,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1980), pp. 65–91.

²⁶ See, for example, Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom—and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India, 1912–1949* (Lund: Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971).

²⁷ Though the majority of the Deobandi ulama opposed Pakistan's creation, a significant minority, led by Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, supported Jinnah and formed the Jamiat-i Ulama-yi Islam to back the Pakistan cause. Among the Bareilvis, there were also many who supported the Pakistan movement. Many of the pro-Pakistan Deobandis drew ideas from Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi. For an example of some of their pro-Pakistan rhetoric, see Chapter 9 in the present volume.

was, in the eyes of most of its supporters, a deeply compelling one. The fact that Pakistan's creation involved the Muslim League's maneuvering within the everyday networks of colonial politics, only dramatized the importance of a symbolic, moral definition of the state that could transcend these 'earth-bound' political structures.

Still, none of this provided a blueprint for how the Pakistan state should exercise its power. If the state was a stage on which the unity of the community was symbolically displayed, the new Pakistan state's administrative power rested inevitably on the tools of control left to it by the British. For this reason, many of the supporters of the Pakistan movement were, from the very beginning, deeply conflicted about the relationship of the state to the society that it purported to rule. Reflecting the symbolic, unitary moral foundations on which Jinnah had based his claim for Pakistan, many of Pakistan's early leaders—particularly among migrants from north India—were highly suspicious of local and regional identities, which they saw as a threat to the moral meaning of the new state. Though the press provided an arena for defining a distinctly Pakistani national identity, it also represented an arena—as it had in British India as well—for publicizing and crystallizing divisive and threatening regional loyalties. For this reason state elites tended to view it with suspicion. Political elites in Pakistan thus sought repeatedly to isolate the Pakistani state from the political pressures of Pakistani society in the ensuing decades, either by turning to the army to protect the state, or by appealing to textual Islam as an independent fount of legitimacy for the state (or both). Though the mobilization of local support had in fact been critical to Pakistan's creation, the state largely sought over the years to separate itself from these local structures—and thus from society itself—ostensibly in order to protect its moral standing.²⁸

The results of this were telling. With the state only weakly integrated with society, it was, ironically, not long before Pakistan began to take on certain features of the medieval, 'networked' model of state and society described by Lapidus. With powerful levers of

²⁸ For a good discussion of the early emergence of a state dominated by the army in Pakistan, see Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). The army's attack on 'corrupt' politicians who had compromised the 'Pakistan ideology' suggests this clearly.

influence in the bureaucracy and the army, the state ruled Pakistan in accord with the nation-state model, and gained a considerable amount of foreign aid and military support in the process. But Pakistani society remained weakly integrated; it was, to use Lapidus's phrase, defined by 'coalitions, alliances, and social cooperation motivated by common interests and fortified by religious and sometimes political norms,' but without a culturally integrative architecture of power. Local structures of power of course there were, but the framework of political integration was provided by a state—and a bureaucracy—that relied heavily on support external to society itself.

This is not to say, of course, that the state did not attempt to manipulate societal structures to its own advantage. This was perhaps most dramatically undertaken in the 1980s by General Zia ul-Haq, who, in spite of the potential dangers, began to try to manipulate networks of ulama and Islamists in order to further the army's own policies in Afghanistan (encouraging, at the same time, the heightening of bitter—and sometimes armed—sectarian controversy within Pakistan itself).²⁹ Yet the result was that relations between state and society (even in the decade of civilian rule after Zia's death in 1988) moved yet further toward the 'networked' model. Institutionally, of course, Pakistan continued to deploy most of the legal and administrative features of the modern nation-state. Indeed, the 'national' model continued to maintain a significant hold on the Pakistani imagination. But even as Pakistan's leaders tried to justify their actions *both* in the language of Islamic unity *and* in the geopolitical language of national interest, they came in many respects to resemble more and more the predatory, militarized state that is described by Vincent Cornell. The tension between the image of Pakistan as a territorial nation, and of the Pakistan idea as a symbolic focus for individual participation in the worldwide *ummah*, continued to shape the search for a distinctly 'Pakistani' identity. While some Pakistanis saw the Pakistan idea as itself symbolic of participation in the *ummah*, others saw the state itself as so compromised and corrupt—even as a supposed embodiment of the nation—that only independent action, cutting across structures of state authority, could

²⁹ For a discussion of this, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3 (1998), pp. 689–716.

define moral participation in the networked structure of an Islamic *ummah*.

* * * *

The history of Pakistan thus points us back to the continuing power in the modern world of the medieval models of state–society relations that, as Lapidus argues, defined Islam as a ‘networked civilization’. And yet, it also suggests the tensions inherent in such sweeping metaphors. If the continuing weak integration of state and society in Pakistan today links the history of Muslim community in South Asia to a ‘networked’ civilizational past, the story of Pakistan’s creation also suggests a complex interaction between modern images of state, society, and community. If the historical image of Islam as a ‘networked civilization’ provides us with a backdrop for understanding much in the dynamics of Pakistan’s creation, no less important were the realities of modern colonial rule in India, the emergence of a public sphere linked to print and publication, and the increasing power in world affairs of the normative model of the nation-state. The value for us of a networked metaphor for ‘Islamic civilization’ thus lies not in its descriptive power in capturing the essence of Muslim politics and Muslim societies, but rather in directing us toward an understanding of the interaction between essentialized moral images and shifting historical forces that the modern imagining of Pakistan—and of Islamic ‘civilization’—has entailed.

This is no less true in today’s ‘information age’ than it was in earlier centuries. The internet, like the world of print and publication, is a realm that supports newly imagined moral unities—but also bitter competition and multiple identities. While it has opened the arenas of public debate to increasingly large numbers of people, it has hardly resolved tensions between moral community and structures of authority. Such tensions continue to be played out through appeals to symbols. Public criticism by some Muslims of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, for example, mirrored in certain respects, though on a far larger scale, the public devotion to the Prophet visible in criticism of the publication of *Rangila Rasul* in the Punjab over a half century earlier. Publicized acts of devotion, such as the 9/11 massacre, still evoke images of a community rooted in networks and individual

actions that transcend territorial politics, even as they spark revulsion among vast numbers of Muslims who reject the politics and values on which they are based. In all these cases, the symbolic protection (or symbolic destruction) of *public* symbols is played off against bitter conflict among competing networks of Muslims. Indeed, the analysis of the network as a metaphor for understanding Muslim civilization cannot be separated from the larger conflicts and debates that have long shaped the history of how Muslims—and others—have imagined Muslim ‘civilization’.

Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative

Few events have been more important to the history of modern South Asia than the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. The coming of partition has cast a powerful shadow on historical reconstructions of the decades before 1947, while the ramifications of partition have continued to leave their mark on subcontinental politics 60 years after the event.

And yet, neither scholars of British India nor scholars of Indian nationalism have been able to find a compelling place for partition within their larger historical narratives.¹ For many British empire historians, partition has been treated as an illustration of the failure of the ‘modernizing’ impact of colonial rule, an unpleasant blip on the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial worlds. For many nationalist Indian historians, it resulted from the distorting impact of colonialism itself on the transition to nationalism and modernity, ‘the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics,’ and ‘a tragic accompaniment to the exhilaration and promise of a freedom fought for with courage and valour.’²

Surprisingly, partition occupies an uncertain place in historical narrative even for historians of Pakistan. Though the creation of Pakistan occupies, of course, a central and positive place in the narrative of Pakistani history, its continuity with the history preceding and following it has been open to serious question. While some

¹ Gyanendra Pandey, ‘The Prose of Otherness,’ in David Arnold and David Hardiman, eds, *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vol. 8 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 204–5.

² Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 3.

Pakistani historians have argued for a direct narrative line from the arrival of Muslims in India to the creation of Pakistan, the fact that the creation of Pakistan marked a partition not simply of the subcontinent, but of the Indian Muslim community itself, has made the fitting of the creation of Pakistan into any simple narrative of Muslim community extremely problematic.³ The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 made this all the more difficult. While the creation of a Muslim state in 1947 is generally celebrated in Pakistani historiography, the actual partition of the subcontinent often has about it an air of betrayal.

For historians, the roots of the problem lie in the marked disjunction in the historical literature between the story of the 'high politics' of partition, the negotiations between the British, the Congress, and the Muslim League that led to the creation of Pakistan, and the narrative of popular history, of 'history from below'. The 'high politics' of partition has, in fact, long been a staple for historians. The drama of partition has focused on the tragic story of a few men (or, nowadays, of a few men and Lady Mountbatten⁴) deciding the fates of voiceless millions. 'Never before in South Asian history,' Mushirul Hasan writes, 'did so few divide so many. . . .'⁵ Here we have, usually, a story of almost incomparably high-stakes intrigue against the backdrop of a swirling sea of violence-prone humanity. Recent scholarship has greatly complicated this story, showing us the complexity of the issues that drove the negotiations.⁶ But the scholarship on the 'high politics' of partition has nevertheless tended to posit a realm of political negotiation relatively uninfluenced by the everyday politics of local life.

Fiction, on the other hand, has provided an intense window on the personal experiences of 1947, dramatizing graphically the impact of

³ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

⁴ For a recent interpretation emphasizing the influence on partition of Nehru's affair with Lady Mountbatten, see Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 143–60.

⁵ Mushirul Hasan, 'Introduction,' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 43.

⁶ H.V. Brasted and Carl Bridge, 'The Transfer of Power in South Asia: An Historiographical Review,' *South Asia*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1994), pp. 93–114.

partition on everyday lives. Recent years have witnessed the publication of a number of anthologies of partition stories, and historians have begun to make increasing reference to this work.⁷ But fiction has, ironically, proved a far more powerful vehicle for describing the influence of partition on the common man and woman than for describing the influence of the common people on partition. 'There is a single, common note which informs nearly all the stories written about the Partition and the horror it unleashed,' Alok Bhalla writes, 'a note of utter bewilderment.'⁸ Indeed, the disconnection between the rarefied decisions leading to partition, and the searing consequences on individual lives, remains one of the most powerful tropes that has been carried from partition fiction into the work of historians.⁹

Some historians, of course, have incorporated fiction and personal histories into their work in ways that have highlighted the distinctive impact of partition on the lives of different classes and genders. Such work has proved fruitful in illustrating how different groups of people have in retrospect made sense (or failed to make sense) of the partition experience, and in highlighting how the new states created in 1947 attempted to forge their own national identities through efforts to deal with the aftermath of partition's violence. Recent analysis of efforts to construct meanings out of partition's violence has focused, for example, on the resettlement of refugees and the 'recovery' of abducted women. In the best of these works, the tensions between the experiences of individuals, and the attempts of the new states to give 'national' meaning to the events of partition (by attempting to restore a

⁷ For a review, see Jason Francisco, 'In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly,' *Annual of Urdu Studies*, vol. 11 (1996), pp. 227–50.

⁸ Alok Bhalla, 'Introduction,' in *Stories About the Partition of India*, vol. 1. (New Delhi: Indus, 1994), p. ix.

⁹ In a recent essay, for example, Ian Talbot sees this literature as providing insight into the 'human impact' of partition: 'the searing reality of the agony' of partition violence, 'the complexity of human emotions' in the face of loss, and the 'sense of uprootedness' brought about by the partition migrations. But there is virtually no attempt to integrate these perspectives into a larger narrative of the politics of partition. See Ian Talbot, *Freedom's Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experience in North-West India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 105, 144–45.

patriarchal moral order in their wake), have helped to define the contours of a narrative of memory about partition.¹⁰

But the violence of partition itself has resisted effective integration with the political narrative of partition's causes. Historians can interpret how the stories of partition are told and how they are given meaning, but the place of the violence in the larger historical narrative has continued to prove elusive. Some historians have wondered whether 'the language of historical discourse' is in the end capable of capturing the meaning of violence for those who experienced it.¹¹ Others have been more categorical. Peter van der Veer, after analyzing the narrativization of communal violence, concludes that 'there is no true story of violence. . . . Something terrible has happened and there is no plot, no narrative, only traces that lead nowhere.'¹² The disjunction between the narrative of high politics and the personal experience of violence is here raised to a principle—suggesting, by implication, the impossibility of creating a meaningful narrative of the partition story.

Is the story of partition, then, to remain outside history? The question of defining a narrative of partition must inevitably lead back to central questions about the role of narrative in history more generally. As Hayden White has suggested, the construction of historical narratives almost inevitably implies the 'emplotment' of events to convey moral meaning.¹³ But in most modern history, it has been the vicissitudes of the nation that have most prominently shaped

¹⁰ See, for example, Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries* (1998); Gyanesh Khudaisya, 'The Demographic Upheaval of Partition: Refugees and Agricultural Resettlement in India, 1947–67,' *South Asia*, vol. 18, Special Issue (1995), pp. 73–94; Andrew Major, "'The Chief Sufferers': Abduction of Women During the Partition of Punjab,' *South Asia*, vol. 18, Special Issue (1995), pp. 57–72; Urvashi Butalia, 'Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency during Partition,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, no. 17 (1993), pp. WS-13–24.

¹¹ Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness,' p. 221.

¹² Peter van der Veer, 'Writing Violence,' in David Ludden, ed., *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 269.

¹³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), ch. 1.

these meanings. 'As we know,' van der Veer writes, 'history is the grand narrative of the modern nation-state.'¹⁴ Yet partition presents a story that cannot easily be narrativized simply within the frame of the territorial nation-state's history. Nor, with violence at its heart, is the story easy to assimilate to the search for a narrative history linking a 'history from below' with a larger state-oriented narrative. For all the concern by historians to bridge the dividing line of 1947, partition has generally eluded effective incorporation into larger narratives. It dramatizes more than most events the tension between the idea of an 'objective' narrative history centered on the state and the multiple identities (and multiple narratives) constructed on the margins.¹⁵

But the very problems in making narrative sense of 1947 should perhaps push historians toward rethinking some of the key concepts that have defined the story. Its very intractability should perhaps lead us to new questions about the relationship between high politics and popular violence, between state authority and moral community, and about the relationship of these oppositions to the meaning of the nation. Most important, it might lead us to a narrative that places the tension between multiple realities and the production of shared moral meaning at the very heart of the partition story. Rather than aim for a 'master narrative' of partition whose moral meaning will transcend the multiple and sometimes inchoate stories produced by the violence of partition, we should perhaps seek to understand the ways that the very tension between multiple constructions of identity and the search for moral community *itself* defined the partition event. Indeed, it is only by putting this tension at the center of the story that one can hope to define a narrative that can perhaps encompass the divide of 1947—linking the causes of partition to its results, and at the same time defining the contours of a historical narrative that incorporates but is not subsumed by the story of the nation.

¹⁴ van der Veer, 'Writing Violence,' p. 250.

¹⁵ Gyanendra Pandey, 'In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,' *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992), p. 50.

The 'High Politics' of Partition

The search for a narrative framework to contain the story of partition must begin with the search for a narrative of the high politics of Pakistan's creation that at least provides room for an understanding of the ways that everyday lives influenced the decisions made in Delhi and London. One of the most fruitful openings for such a perspective is provided by the work of Ayesha Jalal on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's quest to gain recognition during the Pakistan movement as 'sole spokesman' of the 'Muslim community'.¹⁶ To focus initially on Jinnah is not to suggest, of course, that only the history of Muslims—much less of the elite Muslim leadership—matters in the partition story. Rather, it is to suggest that the actions and agency of Muslims, which were in their varied contexts central to the genesis of the demand for Pakistan, must be at the heart of the underlying 'plot' of the partition narrative.

Jalal's firm focus on Jinnah, as the leader of the Muslim League and 'father' of Pakistan, has in fact been strongly criticized by some. Gyanendra Pandey, for example, accuses Jalal of portraying Jinnah simply as a rational 'great man', acting in the midst of 'a sea of disorderly, irrational forces.'¹⁷ Paying relatively little attention to the dynamics of local level politics, Jalal's emphasis on high politics, he implies, offers little direct analysis of the 'grassroots' concerns of most Muslims themselves.

Much of this criticism is well-founded. But Jalal's book is nevertheless important for the development of a broader narrative precisely because it forces us to dissolve the easy categories—Muslim League, Congress, and British—that have long organized the narrative of high politics. Though these categories remain important for Jalal, her analysis also brings to center-stage the divisions within these categories, and particularly within the Muslim community. In this sense, Jalal's work is most important for providing us with a narrative framework for asking questions about the relationship between 'Muslim' identity, construed as the moral foundation for the Pakistan demand, and the myriad particularistic and fragmentary identities and

¹⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness,' pp. 209–10.

interests that shaped the lives and experiences of India's Muslims. Like others, Jalal portrays Jinnah as driven throughout the partition negotiations by a single-minded commitment to Pakistan. But this commitment derived not primarily, in her account, from a desire for a separate Muslim state, but from a desire to gain recognition as 'sole spokesman' for India's Muslims. At the root of Jinnah's obsession, of course, was the fact that he was *not*, in reality, the sole political voice of Muslims in the 1940s—far from it. The idea of Pakistan, a Muslim state, provided Jinnah symbolic capital as he sought to identify himself with an image of Muslim unity. The real struggle of the Pakistan movement, in this telling, was not so much to create a territorial homeland for India's Muslims, as it was to *create* a Muslim political community, to define a symbolic center to give moral and political meaning to the concept of a united 'Muslim community' in India.

In much commentary, the implications of Jalal's arguments for an understanding of Muslim identities have been subordinated to a discussion of how her story relates to the apportioning of 'responsibility' for the events of 1947. Jalal herself in fact focuses considerable attention on the question of whether Jinnah ever really wanted the creation of a separate Muslim state (and thus partition), or whether the actual partition of India was forced by the leaders of the Congress, who found it more convenient to give Jinnah a 'truncated, moth-eaten' Pakistan than to give him the political position he wanted in a united India. This in turn has led to discussion about whether Jinnah or the Congress were really to 'blame' for partition. Some have seen Jalal's arguments as calling into question Pakistan's pedigree as a national Muslim state. If Pakistan was just a 'bargaining counter', or a ploy to try to engineer a fragile Muslim unity in Indian politics among deeply divided Muslims, and if the actual partition was a product of Congress manipulation, then what justified Pakistan's creation as the embodiment of a Muslim nation? As Asim Roy has written, Jalal's 'revisionism on Jinnah's role in the creation of Pakistan questions the very legitimacy of the state brought into existence by the *Quaid-i Azam* as the universally acknowledged "father of Pakistan".'¹⁸

But such concerns miss the most significant point. Critical to developing a historical narrative is understanding how Muslims

¹⁸ Asim Roy, 'The High Politics of India's Partition: The Revisionist Perspective,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1990), p. 408.

themselves understood the Pakistan idea. Central to any account that links ‘high politics’ with everyday life, therefore, must be an analysis of the relationship between the reality of pervasive political division among Indian Muslims in the decades leading to 1947 and the vision of symbolic unity embodied in the Pakistan concept (and in Jinnah’s claim to be ‘sole spokesman’). On one level, Jalal’s account provides us with this. Her analysis of Jinnah’s tense relations with the leaders of provincial politics in Bengal, Punjab, and elsewhere makes clear the importance of division and conflict in the Pakistan story.¹⁹ But on another level, she tells us little of what the notion of a ‘sole spokesman’ may have actually meant to India’s Muslims. Her work is in fact weakest in exploring the meaning of ‘Muslim community’ either on the level of symbolic actions or in terms of Muslim intellectual history. Criticizing Jalal for this—and for an overly instrumental view of the role of Islam—Farzana Shaikh has tried to remedy this failing, contextualizing the Pakistan demand in the history of modern intellectual debates about the normative meaning of ‘Muslim community’. Supplementing Jalal, Shaikh thus provides an intellectual background against which we can begin to discuss how literate Muslim *ashraf* elites ‘imagined’ a unitary Muslim community in India during these years.²⁰

But adding Shaikh’s account to that of Jalal is still not enough to link the high political story of partition to popular politics, or to contextualize the violence that occurred. Shaikh’s account focuses on the literate *ashraf* elites, important players no doubt, but hardly the entire Muslim community. What is needed, in addition, is an analysis

¹⁹ Jalal’s work suggests the critical importance of the further integration of provincial studies into our understanding of the creation of Pakistan. See, for example, Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India, 1937–47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1988) and D.A. Low, ed., *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan* (London: Macmillan, 1991). It is critical also to bring into the narrative the British devolution of power to the provinces in the period after 1919, a process that had as much influence on the dynamics of the debates leading to partition as did an earlier British policy of ‘divide and rule’ tied to religion.

²⁰ Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

of how the idea of Pakistan took on significance in counterpoint to the politics of local conflict and local division that continued to shape the lives of most Muslims. As Jalal makes clear, tension in the constitution of the categories that defined partition was central to the event.²¹ Divisions among Muslims, in her telling, not only complicated the story—but in critical respects *drove* the story. To push these implications a bit further than Jalal does, one could plausibly argue that had Muslims been without division (a counterfactual impossibility, but one useful to highlight the argument), there might well have been no Pakistan, no partition at all.

What, then, did ‘Muslim nationalism’ mean in this context? Jalal, in the end, offers us little foundation for understanding this. An account of the *dynamics* of identity formation—of how the symbolic concept of Pakistan in fact fed off the divisions in Muslim politics, and of the role violence played in this process—is largely missing from her narrative. But her reading of the partition debate nevertheless offers us a framework within which we can begin to ask these questions.

Communalism and the Construction of Muslim Identities

For serious analysis of *processes* of identity formation, and of the creative tension between unity and division, we must turn not to existing histories of the ‘high politics’ of partition, but to the literature on the history of communalism in colonial India. Scholarly literature on the nature of communalism and ‘religious nationalism’ is now so large and so complex that it is difficult to characterize. Most useful, however, in providing a necessary counterweight to the story of partition’s ‘high politics’, is historical work analyzing communalism from the bottom up, focusing on *local* communities and their relationship to larger Muslim identities during the colonial period. An

²¹ Though the emphasis here is on Muslims, such tensions were of course critical to the Congress and to Hindus as well. The relationship between the categories ‘untouchable’ and ‘Hindu’ is a good example. The politics of partition crystallized debate on the local meanings of these categories (in Bengal, for example) as the Muslim League made direct efforts to ‘count’ scheduled castes on their side of the ledger. In this sense the meaning of ‘Hindu community’ was also implicated in the debates about partition.

initial focus on the locality has provided insights largely missing in the larger literature on the politics of partition.

One of the best examples of such an approach is provided by Gyanendra Pandey's analysis of the parameters of Muslim identity in the 19th-century *qasba* of Mubarakpur.²² Mubarakpur was a small town in the United Provinces that was dominated by Muslim elites, but was also marked by significant class cleavages within the Muslim population. Pandey examines a 'history' of the community produced in the late 19th century by one of its leading Muslim citizens. In analyzing this history, Pandey shows that notions of 'Muslim' identity were closely bound up with larger ideas about moral order. But identification with a larger Muslim community was inseparably intertwined with the *particular* identity of the *local* community (and with the authority of the *sharif* Muslims who saw their status and position as central to local order). As Pandey shows, the poorer Muslim weavers of Mubarakpur often had a tense relationship with these *sharif* leaders, and their own vision of community was, in critical respects, quite different. But the vessel of Islamic moral order in this story was the local community itself, with its own distinctive structures of authority, subordination, and conflict.

Pandey's account suggests two vital features of identity, critical for understanding the later Pakistan movement. First, Muslim identities in India were almost always embedded in a range of *particular* social and political orders. If Islam shaped notions of legitimate moral order, it did so in relation to local configurations of power and community, configurations in which distinctions of status, hierarchy, and interest among Muslims were critical, and in which Hindus and Muslims were sometimes intimately joined. And following from this, Pandey's analysis suggests implicitly that the identities of Muslims were nested and in tension. Even as the author of the local history asserted the importance of Muslim identity (and Islamic moral order), he was asserting at the same time the importance of his own *sharif* identity,

²² Gyanendra Pandey, "'Encounters and Calamities': The History of a North Indian *Qasba* in the Nineteenth Century,' in Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); and Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 109–57.

which marked him off from lower-class Muslim weavers. A transcendent Islamic identity *and* a distinctive class identity were asserted in the same breath.

Though the language of community definition was Islamic and rooted in the idea of an encompassing Islamic moral order, Muslim community and Muslim division emerged in the same process.

Understanding this is critical to understanding larger processes of identity formation. Viewed from the locality, the distinction between a dispositive normative Islamic order on the one hand (such as is asserted by Farzana Shaikh), and the notion of Muslim elites manipulating Islam for their own instrumental purposes on the other (such as Jalal seems to suggest), begins to dissolve.²³ But what was the process within which this tension between unity and division, between status hierarchy and an all-encompassing moral order, was played out?

Perhaps the best work that tackles the *dynamics* of identity formation in this context is Sandria Freitag's discussion of the emergence of communalism in north India, a work that also begins with the analysis of community at the local level. Freitag argues that the key to the meaning of community in the towns of colonial north India was the 'public arena', the arena of public performance and of 'collective activities in public spaces.'²⁴ It was through public, collective activities that local community (that is, a sense of collectivity, or identity), was expressed. 'Community', as enacted in such public arenas, was never fixed or static. Public arena performances (such as Muharram or Ram Lila) did not simply 'enact' community, they were a central part of the process by which a sense of moral order was created. On one level, of course, these festivals evoked symbols of moral order drawn from distinctively Hindu or

²³ The opposition between these two poles of interpretation was crystallized almost 20 years ago in a debate between Paul Brass and Francis Robinson. Brass argued that competition among elites drove them to manipulate Islamic language in order to mobilize popular support. Robinson argued against this emphasis on instrumental manipulation, stressing instead the normative power of Islamic ideas in shaping elite action. See David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp, eds, *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 1979), pp. 35–112.

²⁴ Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. xii.

Muslim repertoires. But on another level, their meaning was intimately connected to the distinctive particularities of local place, and thus to local structures of relationships and traditions of performance that Hindus and Muslims shared. Central, in fact, to the significance of these festivals was that they were arenas of competition (in both patronage and performance) for status conflicts of all kinds. A focus on 'public arenas' thus suggests how conflicts rooted in everyday life, which cut across the distinction between Hindus and Muslims, were central to the process by which larger notions of moral order were expressed and created.

Freitag in fact draws on the terminology of Victor Turner to suggest how division and collectivity were interrelated. Public arena performances were enacted in a realm of special time, in which a sense of commonality (or 'communitas') developed that transcended everyday structure (even though such performances had, of course, their own structures). Much public ceremony was conducted in a realm of 'sacred time', in which the individual confronted the moral order of the whole.²⁵ And yet this 'communitas' gained meaning only in juxtaposition to the structures of power, status, and division marking everyday life. It did not replace such division; it represented a form of identity operating on a different plane of time. It was no accident, Freitag argues, that religious riots often grew out of the tensions that arose during these public arena activities; indeed, riots were in some respects an extension of the contestation that marked public arena performances. Violent conflict was both a manifestation of the contested character of collective identity (which upset any effort by the state to fix and stabilize local communities) and an attempt to protect and reassert the existence of a larger moral order (and of membership in a larger community) as protection for the individual within a local world marked by hierarchy, domination, and uncertainty. As Freitag notes of many riots, they were often as much a product of everyday conflicts and contests *among* Muslims or *among* Hindus as they were of longstanding conflicts between them, even though symbolic violence frequently took Hindu-Muslim form. Pressures over status in the face of changing socio-economic circumstances helped to produce new public and ceremonial reforms by both Hindu and Muslim leaders, which in turn helped often to

²⁵ Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, p. 137.

provoke violent conflict with a symbolic 'other' as the local bonds of community were renegotiated.

To understand more fully the relation between these processes and the emergence of Muslim communalism, however, another element must be introduced into this picture, and that is the role of the colonial state. While many have written of the ways that the British colonial state created new definitions of religious community through the census and other bureaucratic processes (fixing community definitions and a structure of representation for the colonial state), another aspect of the colonial state is far more important to Freitag's model. Seeing itself as a mediator standing outside the structure of society, the British government withdrew in the 19th century from any direct role in the operation of local public arenas. Though it sought to regulate these, and at times to intervene in the interest of order, the British (unlike earlier states) played no role as cultural patrons in these arenas, a stance which, as Rosalind O'Hanlon has put it, 'opened the way for a great expansion in numbers of new patrons, often merchant and new Hindu service people, who competed among themselves and with older state elites to sponsor public ritual.'²⁶ Changing economic fortunes, changing patterns of education, and expanding print communications all shaped shifts in power in particular localities (as for example between *ashraf* elites and other groups) that were played out in contestations for status and precedence within the public arena. Similarly, class identities were often asserted within the moral framework of religious contestation.²⁷ In this respect the British state helped to shape patterns of community redefinition and conflict, even as it stood in selfdefinition apart from these processes.

²⁶ O'Hanlon here is drawing on the work of Katherine Prior. Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Historical Approaches to Communalism: Perspectives from Western India,' in Peter Robb, ed., *Society and Ideology: Essays in South Asian History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 251.

²⁷ Scholarship on Bengal has tended to put particular emphasis on the role of class conflicts in shaping these processes; see, for example, Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Taj ul-Islam Hashmi, *Pakistan as a Peasant Utopia: The Communalization of Class Politics in East Bengal, 1920–47* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

Though structurally embedded in colonial rule, public arenas thus defined a realm for cultural self-definition that was largely autonomous of the colonial state. And for this reason their structure exerted a powerful influence in the late 19th century on the emerging realm of print and public debate also—the realm in which late 19th century communalism emerged. This was a new, trans-local site for cultural selfdefinition, but one whose structure in critical respects paralleled that of local public arenas—for it was a realm embedded also in the structure of colonial rule, and yet, like public arenas, (relatively) autonomous of the direct power of the colonial state. The changes associated with new technologies of communication, with the extension of access to property and to the British legal system, and—perhaps most important—with the development of education and a commercial press, defined a realm increasingly marked by what Benedict Anderson has called ‘print capitalism’. Yet, if the structure of this realm was in critical respects a product of late 19th century capitalist transformations, the forms in which ‘community’ was constructed (or ‘imagined’) reflected also the structure of cultural competition and patronage that had long ordered local public arenas. This new ‘public realm’ in fact grew in colonial India, in contrast to Anderson’s model, from a fusing of the realm of letters with the autonomous public arena of cultural performance and religious ceremonial—a central reason, perhaps, why the language of religion and moral order came to play so central a role in it.

It was within this realm that some politicians sought increasingly in the 20th century to mobilize broad religious categories of identity and opposition. The colonial state’s own use of such categories of course influenced significantly this development. But tensions harking back to local processes of identity formation were also deeply ingrained in communal rhetoric, for they were intrinsic to the structure of the public realm itself. Although the language of communalist self-assertion in this realm was charged with a concern for unity and a search for moral order, the images of unity that were created were often in tension with the structure of a realm that was a site primarily for competition and debate. The old ‘moral city’ of mosques, courts, schools, and market, to use Faisal Devji’s terms, had been displaced by the realm of print and public meetings as a ‘stage’ for the

representation of the Muslim ‘moral collectivity’.²⁸ Men with claims to communal leadership in this realm (such as the Ali brothers, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, and, ultimately, Jinnah) came to depend far less on established religious credentials than on their ability to successfully deploy the language of moral community in public controversy, as they appealed for the support of autonomous individuals through print and the public platform. Even as their language created an image of communal unity (sometimes in opposition to a Hindu ‘other’), it was most commonly deployed in the context of public controversy among Muslims themselves.

Continuities between local processes and those in the public realm were thus critical for framing the emergence of 20th-century communalism, not just as the expression of an imagined opposition between large religious communities, but as a reflection also of the ongoing tension between local, regional, and other particular identities on the one hand, and the claims of moral order on the other. The new public realm was a site not only for communal self-definition, but also for the simultaneous generation of other new forms of public identity—sectarian, linguistic, regional, and *biradari* identities, sometimes linking Hindus and Muslims.²⁹ Without an ordering political foundation for the moral realm, it was only the competitive *language* of moral selfdefinition that in the public realm defined larger moral collectivities. And yet this language was always shifting, appealed to in the name of legitimation and moral purpose by many, and yet manipulated also by leaders with powerful local and regional, class and *biradari* interests, each jockeying for status, power, and position.

²⁸ Faisal Devji, ‘Gender and the Politics of Space: The Movement for Women’s Reform in Muslim India, 1857–1900,’ *South Asia*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1991), p. 149.

²⁹ For an example of the development of ‘public’ *biradari* identities in the Punjab, in their relationship both to local organization and to the public construction of Muslim identity, see Chapter 2. For a discussion of the relationship between religious rhetoric and the simultaneous development of linguistic identities, see essays in Kenneth Jones, ed., *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

Reform, Devotion, and Muslim Nationalism

Tensions between moral community and structures of local power and status in fact suffused the language of communal self-definition among Indian Muslims in the first half of the 20th century. The rhetorics of reform and devotion, each in its own way central to the public imagining of Muslim community in 20th-century India, illustrate this—and point toward the critical tensions that shaped an emerging ‘Muslim nationalism’.

The idiom of ‘reform’ (*tajdid*) had in fact long played a central role in the discursive articulation of Muslim moral community. Focused on personal behavior—and on the tension between rational moral ideals and the psychological pull of everyday needs—‘reformism’ offered a critical rhetorical strategy for defining an image of moral community independent of the structure of colonial authority. Since much of the language of religious reform in the late 19th and 20th centuries hinged on the internalization of religious authority, the rhetoric of ‘reform’ allowed Muslims to assert simultaneously in the public realm *both* the autonomy of the individual *and* the normative unity of the community.

Among the most important fields for reformist rhetoric was debate about the position of women. Yet debates on women, which bitterly divided Muslims, highlighted in particularly dramatic fashion the contradictions inherent in the definition of moral community through open public debate. For some, including some women, the education of women, and the recognition of women’s rights under Islamic law, were linked to the moral realization of the community. The individual struggle to internalize reform, to bring the self under the control of moral rationality (a concern central to women’s education), paralleled in critical respects the struggle to bring the diffuse world of local custom and competition among Muslims under the control of broader principles of moral community.³⁰ In this respect, the rhetoric of women’s education and family reform potentially challenged local status hierarchies: by appealing to a larger moral order, reformist writers promised to expand the scope of individual autonomy at the expense of local particularism (even while defining the idealized

³⁰ Barbara Daly Metcalf, ‘Islam and Custom in Nineteenth Century India,’ *Contributions to Asian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 10 (1982), pp. 62–77.

Muslim family as a critical site for the production of Muslim identity).³¹

Yet, at the same time—and more importantly—women's reform was also a distinctively class-based project. Through an emphasis on women's education—and the moral reform of the family—literate *sharif* leaders sought to establish themselves as rational, independent, morally responsible spokesmen for the Muslim community as a whole. Their aim in this context was to reinforce existing local status hierarchies of honour and authority, even while underscoring the moral standing of *sharif* leaders to act as community spokesmen in the new public realm.³²

Reformist social debates on women thus suggested the critical importance of class and status competition in driving debates on the meaning of moral community, even as the language of debate helped to create the public image of a unitary moral touchstone of Muslim identity. The very publicness of the debate illustrated how the most mundane problems of family organization—problems of potential concern to Muslims of every class—could be vitally related to the moral and political definition of the community as a whole. And yet, even as these debates evoked a language of normative unity, they also suggested the critical tension between moral unity and self-interested

³¹ A good example of this is provided by the debates concerning legislation on the *shariat* in the 1930s, which hinged, at least in part, on securing rights of inheritance for women who had formerly been denied such rights under customary law. The *shariat* was for many a symbol of the larger moral community, and the appeal to *shariat* rules of inheritance was for some (particularly in the Punjab) a way to challenge in the name of individual rights local hierarchies of status rooted in *biradari* organization. Of course, for others it had different meanings.

³² See, for example, Devji, 'Gender and the Politics of Space'; Michelle Maskiell, *Women Between Cultures: The Lives of Kinnaird College Alumnae in British India* (Syracuse: Maxwell School, Syracuse University, 1984); Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Shahnaz Rouse, 'Gender, Nationalism(s) and Cultural Identity,' in Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis, eds, *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996).

competition (which paralleled the internalized struggle between moral knowledge and selfish instinct) in defining the community within the public realm.

Similar in this regard was the language of personal devotionism. Peter van der Veer has stressed the role of devotionism in religious nationalism more broadly.³³ But devotionism, like reform, gained particular political significance in the context of the emerging public realm, where the 'love' by autonomous individuals for Muslim symbols came to define new constructions of community that transcended concrete divisions of interest and status. Such was the case, for example, in the increasingly popular emphasis on love of the Prophet (as enacted in public ceremonial such as the Prophet's birthday) and in new forms of Sufi devotionism linking an emphasis on mass printing with love of the *shaikh*.³⁴ Most dramatic, however, were the public agitations in the 20th century that mobilized devotion to and protection of Muslim symbols, such as the Khilafat, or the 'martyred' Kanpur and Shahidganj mosques, or the holy Prophet, whose honor was defended during the 'Rangila Rasul' agitation of the 1920s.³⁵ These agitations linked widespread public demonstrations with a language of personal sacrifice and devotion to create an image of moral unity that transcended everyday political conflict. With the state no longer defining the moral parameters of the community or its political form, individuals remade the community in the public realm by attaching their hearts to Muslim symbols and making these inner hearts public in open contestation.

³³ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 43–53.

³⁴ See Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilly and his Movement, 1870–1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

³⁵ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Sandria B. Freitag, 'The Roots of Muslim Separatism in South Asia: Personal Practice and Public Structures in Kanpur and Bombay,' in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus, eds, *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 115–45; G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 40–47.

By constructing community in a realm of individual affect, expressions of public devotionism thus transcended many of the internalized tensions that marked the rationalist realm of 'reformist' debate.³⁶ But at the same time, the personalistic language of devotional community also contained its own ambiguities. Calls for devotion and sacrifice in defence of symbols of community often drew heavily on the gendered language of male 'honor', an idiom that evoked not only the universalism of patriarchy but also the particularistic (and highly competitive) loyalties attached to 'tribe', family, and other kinshipbased identities. Moreover, the language of devotionism, by its very nature, required public enactment, and its expression thus tended to be ephemeral.³⁷ Its power derived precisely from the tension between an autonomous realm of affect, emotion, and personal sacrifice, on the one hand, and an everyday structure of political interest and local competition, on the other.

Tension between images of moral unity and the divisions and hierarchies of everyday life, embodied in the language of reform and devotion alike, thus epitomized the 20th-century public realm. And such tensions were only heightened in the 1920s and 1930s by the gap between urban politics, where the public realm was most developed, and the reality of patronage-based politics in the rural areas, where the majority of India's Muslims (particularly in the Muslim-majority provinces) lived. In reorganizing the Muslim League in the 1930s, it was Jinnah's aim to develop a fixed organizational structure with the capacity to transcend these divisions.

³⁶ For some contrast of these 'reformist' and 'devotional' constructions of community, see Chapter 5.

³⁷ There were, of course, organizations that grew out of such symbolic agitations, from the Khilafat committees of the 1920s to the Movement for the Finality of the Prophethood that emerged from anti-Ahmadi agitations in the 1930s. Some organizations, such as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's Ittihad-i Millat, formed during the Shahidganj mosque agitation in the 1930s, later contested elections. But on the whole, such organizations had little organized staying power, dependent as they were on the ephemeral symbolic dramatization of devotion to Muslim symbols. The political squabbling that succeeded such agitations often engendered breast-beating about the problems of community 'division'. But it is significant that the very language of 'division' hinged on its juxtaposition with the image of moral unity that these agitations evoked.

But it was the state itself, in the end, which provided the political structures necessary for the League's efforts. Critical to the League's political imagining of an encompassing Muslim community was the gradual introduction into 20th-century India of elected legislatures, of arenas of electoral contestation that were, like other public arenas, autonomous of the state's direct cultural patronage, but which the British had demarcated to conform directly to the state's administrative structure. Elections played an increasingly important role in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s as a new kind of public realm linking society and state. This was a realm, of course, that was largely focused at the regional level, as the British had begun for their own reasons after 1920 to devolve authority to the provinces. But in spite of this—and the still restricted character of the electoral franchise—elections offered a structure that subsumed in critical ways the tension between an image of overarching Muslim unity and the reality of conflict and competition that had marked the public realm of Muslim debate.³⁸

At the heart of this was the British definition of separate electorates, which after 1920 provided the frame for nearly all Muslim elections. The significance of separate electorates lay in the fact that they offered a structural definition of Muslim community far different from that emerging from reformist or devotional politics. Separate electorates rested on a flat, homogenous definition of Muslim community in which descent was primary—a definition drawn from the British-Indian census. Separate electorates thus provided a bureaucratically fixed frame for Muslim community definition that had little reference to ongoing public debates relating to reformed behavior or to matters of the heart. At the same time, however, separate electorates subsumed the competitive structure of the electoral process itself, where rival Muslim candidates mobilized their opposing networks of personal, kin- and class-based support in sometimes bitter competition. Separate electorates thus embodied, *simultaneously*, the image of a common Muslim

³⁸ In the Punjab, for example, approximately 24 percent of the adult population (and a larger proportion of the adult male population) gained the vote in Assembly elections after 1935. Kripal C. Yadav, *Elections in the Punjab, 1920–1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), p. 19.

community, fixed by state definition, and the reality of deep provincial and local divisions.

What separate electorates did not do, of course, with their roots in flat census definitions, was to define a moral language of Muslim unity. Indeed, the structural framework offered by separate electorates provides us a critical backdrop for understanding the Muslim League's adoption in 1940 of the demand for Pakistan. It was in response both to the electoral successes of the Congress in 1937 and to the growing sense of fragmentation among Muslims themselves—with powerful regional parties dominating politics in Punjab and Bengal—that the Muslim League linked its identity to the demand for a separate state as a symbol of the community's *moral* unity.³⁹ Tension between an image of moral unity and the competitive structuring of politics had of course long shaped Muslim rhetoric within the public realm. But now the League sought to frame this realm of competition with a fixed image of unity—an image tied *both* to census definitions *and* to the moral authority associated with the image of a Muslim state. In mobilizing support within the context of the 1946 provincial elections, Jinnah sought to tap into the most particularistic forms of influence. In the Punjab and Sind, for example, Jinnah and the leaders of the League took careful account of local identities based on caste, tribe, *biradari*, and family connection in organizing their 1946 candidate lists. Had they not done so, it is unlikely that they could have swept the majority of the Muslim seats and defeated powerful regional parties such as the Punjab Unionists. But at the same time Jinnah's claim to moral leadership and moral unity rested on the League's mobilization of an image of Pakistan configured in sharp opposition to this conflicted, everyday world.

The call for Pakistan thus drew on the tension between images of unity and division long marking reformist and devotional rhetoric.

³⁹ Mushirul Hasan has analyzed perhaps most clearly the pressures created by the 1937 Congress ministries, including the interaction between class and communal tensions, in influencing the timing of the emergence of the Pakistan demand. For an overview, see Hasan, 'Introduction,' in *India's Partition*, pp. 3–26. There is little doubt that the emergence of a language of *Hindu* moral unity within the public realm—which strongly influenced a wing of the Congress—also played a role in League perceptions of the Congress, and thus on the timing of the Pakistan demand.

While the League appealed strongly in its 1946 election campaign to fears of ‘Hindu domination’, it linked these fears repeatedly to the dangers presented by division within the Muslim community itself. Nothing, after all, was more morally threatening to the ordering of civic life than *fitna*, moral disorder, whose specter had long been invoked by Muslim states in legitimizing their authority. By invoking the danger of *fitna*, the Muslim League thus underscored the importance of a symbolic definition of Muslim unity and community—the state of Pakistan—as the key to the moral definition of a distinctively Muslim public realm. And yet, as in the structuring of local public arenas, the symbolic appeal to Muslim unity gained moral meaning only in juxtaposition to structures of conflict, competition and division.⁴⁰

An examination of the dynamics of local identity formation, and of its relationship with the emerging public realm, thus returns us here to the dynamics driving the ‘high politics’ of partition described by Ayesha Jalal—and to the meaning of nationalism. Though the particular structures of Muslim politics and of support for the Muslim League undoubtedly varied from province to province, from locality to locality, and from class to class, it was precisely these differences, these multiple realities, that gave the symbol of Pakistan moral meaning. The very existence of multiple stories (and conflicting interests) defined, in a sense, the moral meaning of Muslim nationalism. Whether ‘imagined’ (à la Benedict Anderson) or a product of the transformations of modernity (à la Ernest Gellner), nationalism, as a form of moral community, gained meaning only in relationship to the ongoing production and operation of the more particular identities that structured politics and everyday life. Though configured morally as transcending local status divisions and distinctions, nationalism cannot be portrayed as something standing apart from them. As historians of communalism have shown, arenas of local cultural competition produced *simultaneously* deep status divisions and a vision of moral community. This pattern marked the emergence of nationalism in the public realm as well. Defined in part by the operation of local-level public arenas, in part by the structure of the emerging public realm in India, and in part by the bureaucratically structured electoral competition of colonial rule in the provinces, the

⁴⁰ See Chapter 9 in the present volume.

search for a symbolic definition of Muslim community emerged into the ‘high politics’ of India’s public realm as the symbolic demand for Pakistan, a Muslim state.

But to begin to discuss the unprecedented violence accompanying partition, we must look also at the critical contradictions within the Pakistan concept. By appealing to the symbolism of a Muslim state, the Muslim League invoked an image of community unity and moral sovereignty, juxtaposed against a world marked by far more complex patterns of social division and local interest. Yet Pakistan came ultimately to represent also a demand for territory, and thus for the territorial partition of the Indian subcontinent. The burden of the argument here is that Jinnah’s negotiating strategy for Pakistan was based far more on the first than the second. But it was the second meaning of Pakistan that came to have the most bloody consequences.

The Creation of Pakistan: State, Place, and Territory

How the notion of Pakistan developed into a separate territorial claim has been frequently discussed but rarely explained. The linking of Pakistan to a definite territory dates back, of course, to Muhammad Iqbal’s 1930 address suggesting a territorial Muslim state in northwest India (though Iqbal did not at that point use the word ‘Pakistan’). Subsequently, Muslim leaders put forth a variety of ‘Pakistan’ plans, often with maps suggesting various territorial configurations. But as many have noted, Jinnah was extraordinarily vague in his calls for Pakistan as a clearly demarcated territorial state. Though Jinnah suggested vaguely that Pakistan would be located where Muslims were in a majority, the ‘two-nation theory’ embodied a fundamentally nonterritorial vision of nationality. Even while squarely linking his claim to be ‘sole spokesman’ to the Pakistan demand, Jinnah generally avoided any clear territorial definition of Pakistan.

The literature on communalism also provides little help in suggesting the roots of the demand for a partition of territory. Though critical in helping us understand the dynamics of identity formation developing out of the localities, this literature has offered very little to

explain the transformation of communalism into the specifically *territorial* demand for India's partition.⁴¹

To find the roots of the demand for territory, we must look in fact not primarily to communalism, but to the increasing engagement of

Indian nationalists and Jinnah alike in the 1930s with the modern, internationalist discourse of territorial nationalism. Many Indian nationalists, led by Nehru, were horrified by communal violence in the 1920s and 1930s, and increasingly came to view communalism largely as a sort of pre-political aberration, a throwback to irrational, primordial values—a fundamental measure, in other words, of what nationalism was not. Communalism's political importance, in Nehru's view, arose largely from the colonial state's ability to manipulate such primordial sentiments in opposition to nationalism for its own benefit. Nehru's vision of the Indian nation thus owed relatively little to the popular processes of identity formation within India's public arenas, both local and extra-local, where autonomous voices contested to define new forms of larger, public identities independent of the colonial state. Under Nehru's leadership, Congress nationalism came instead to be identified in the 1930s and 1940s with a sort of rationalist statism tied to science, modernity, and the individual ethics championed by Gandhi. Relying little on the religious language of moral order and unity as a framework for local contestations among competing interests, Nehru saw national identity as linked instead to individual citizenship. Territorially defined citizenship emerged as the foundation for an alternative definition of the overarching community.⁴²

⁴¹ Sandria Freitag, for example, notes the movement toward territorial separation of Muslim and Hindu neighborhoods following riots in some north Indian cities in the 1930s as prefiguring territorial separation. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, p. 248. But her narrative stops short of partition. Joya Chatterji traces the largely *bhadralok* demand for the provincial partition of Bengal, but does little to frame this within the larger transformation of the Pakistan demand itself into a demand for territory, or in the cultural transformations in the *meaning* of community that this implied. Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–47* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴² This point is made clearly by Gyanendra Pandey. It is not to deny, however, that the Congress, like the League, continued to mobilize on the basis of localized group identities and deployed locally powerful images of

Jinnah's vision of Pakistan was, of course, in some respects far different from this, and yet Jinnah also was strongly influenced by the modern discourse of the nation, with all the assumptions and meanings that implied. The very fact that the Congress increasingly offered a territorial vision of nationhood pushed the Muslim League in the same direction, particularly in the face of Congress attempts to label it as simply 'communalist'. It was in fact critical to Jinnah's message and strategy that the Muslim League was *not* 'communalist', and this was embodied in his symbolic invocation of Pakistan as a 'nation'. In the last decade before 1947, the Muslim League mobilized a range of symbols that appealed to the 'national' ideal, including the flag, an anthem, and the mobilizing of Muslim League National Guards. Ian Talbot has argued persuasively about how the Muslim League National Guards adopted trappings symbolically associated with the state, helping thus to define the Muslim League, like a state, as 'both the expression and guarantor of the cultural identity of the Indian Muslims.' He describes the symbolism of the public flag-hoisting session at one of the Muslim League's annual sessions (at Patna) as 'intended to affirm the Muslim League's claim on the loyalties of individual Muslims as a result of the Pakistan "national" ideology. Those who saluted the flag,' he suggests, 'demonstrated their "citizenship" of Pakistan, although the Muslim state had yet to achieve its fulfillment.'⁴³ Similar commitments were shown by the many Muslim students who supported the Pakistan cause, responding to the Pakistan appeal not only with devotion, but with self-discipline and tireless work on its behalf. These students, like the urban Muslim women who publicly marched for Pakistan during 1946 and 1947, transcended normal political and familial norms in expressing direct

moral (Hindu) community. Pandey's suggestion that, 'by its denial of subjecthood to the people of India—the local communities, castes and classes, nationalism was forced into the kind of statist perspective that colonialism had favoured and promoted for its own reasons,' somewhat overstates the case. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, p. 253. But the notion of territorial citizenship was clearly central to Nehru's view of the world.

⁴³ Talbot, *Freedom's Cry*, pp. 70–74.

individual commitment to Pakistan as a 'national' ideal.⁴⁴ They offered simultaneous evidence of their own autonomy and of powerful personal attachment to symbols that stood for Muslim statehood and 'nationality'.

But their relationship to the symbols of territory was far more problematic. 'A nation,' Jinnah said on more than one occasion, 'must have a territory,' thus echoing in abstract terms the language of modernity necessary to stake his claim as a true nationalist.⁴⁵ Yet even though the term 'Pakistan' was coined to link together into a single territorial reference the names of the provinces of northwestern India, there was little in the rhetoric of the Pakistan movement to suggest that attachment to a *particular* piece of territory was of critical importance to the idea's popular meaning. The very uncertainty as to *which* land was to be that of Pakistan was reflected in the variety of possibilities appearing in various proposals before 1947. That few Muslims saw the appeal for Pakistan in specifically territorial terms was suggested powerfully by the patterns of support that developed for the Muslim League in the years and months before the actual partition plan was announced in June 1947. Bengal, though not even configured into the original list of territories that defined the Pakistan acronym, became ultimately a bastion of Pakistan support. It has often been noted that the Pakistan movement received widespread support among Muslims

⁴⁴ Not all women who participated, of course, challenged familial norms; see David Willmer, 'Women as Participants in the Pakistan Movement: Modernization and the Promise of a Moral State,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1996), pp. 573–90 and Ayesha Jalal, 'The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State in Pakistan,' in Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam and the State*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 83–85. See also Sarfaraz Mirza, *Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, 1969), and on students, Mukhtar Zaman, *Students' Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1978) and Sarfaraz Mirza, ed., *Muslim Students and the Pakistan Movement: Selected Documents* (Lahore: Pakistan Studies Centre, University of the Punjab, 1988–89).

⁴⁵ Quoted in Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Nationalism, Modernity, and Muslim Identity in India before 1947,' in Hartmut Lehmann and Peter van der Veer, eds, *Nation and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 129–43.

in areas that had little conceivable prospect of being incorporated into a territorially bounded Muslim state, while Muslims in the Punjab and NWFP, subsequent heartlands of Pakistan, were among the last to register widespread support for the concept. Such patterns are explicable only if we assume that for most Muslims the meaning of Pakistan did not hinge primarily on its association with a specific territory.

Perhaps most suggestive of the contradictions in Pakistan's association with a fixed territory was the widespread support of the concept among India's most prominent Sufi *shaikhs*. Sufi authority in India was intimately associated with its localized manifestations; indeed, the influence of Sufism was rooted precisely in the placement of Sufis at the intersection of the particular and the universal. While deriving *barakat* (blessedness) from sacred ancestry and from their evocation of the pristine community of the Prophet and his successors, the actual exercise of most Sufi influence in India was pre-eminently local, linked specifically to the particularities of genealogy, and often bound to particular localities through the blessing attached to Sufi tombs. Sufi authority in fact dramatized the ways in which participation in a larger moral community also entailed, inevitably, the mediation of the local and the particular. Though some Sufis and Sufi shrines had reputations that extended well beyond particular localities—and which had been enhanced by the emergence of printing and the public realm⁴⁶—the very structure of Sufi authority suggested the ways that territory gained blessedness through the operation of sacred genealogy and through the distribution of sites of charisma that transcended any fixed territorial boundaries. There is little way to make sense of Sufi support for Pakistan if we were to imagine that Sufis foresaw Pakistan in terms of the partition of India's territory. How, after all, could Pakpattan be more blessed than Ajmer, or Golra more blessed than Gulbarga?

Indeed, the tensions that the notion of territory engendered in the Pakistan movement are clearest if we contrast the notion of territory with the notion of *place*. As Gyanendra Pandey's article on Mubarakpur suggested, the idea of place had long been central to the conception of moral community for most Muslims in India, for it was the local community that was the vessel through which most Muslims

⁴⁶ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, pp. 190–223.

participated in a larger moral order. Muslims, of course, also participated in wider arenas, which were critical in shaping the larger discourse of moral community that framed the local community, and within which the demand for Pakistan was made. Indeed, the moral definition of this public realm was at the heart of the Pakistan demand. But the very *particularity* of place remained central to the popular meaning of moral community, for it was this particularity that allowed the notion of place to subsume and define the networks of personal, genealogical, familial and status relationships—and the local divisions—in relation to which moral community was experienced and enacted in everyday life.⁴⁷

As a symbol defining the moral sovereignty of the Muslim community within the public realm, Pakistan represented no challenge to this vision of place; one might argue that it represented this notion of place writ large. If there was a tension between an idealized image of Pakistan as a place and the realities of everyday life, then this was a tension that simply shaped the capacity for moral striving that lay at the heart of Muslim identity. And yet it was as the name of a bounded territory that Pakistan increasingly came to figure in the negotiations of the Congress, the British, and the Muslim League in 1946–47—a result in part of the assumptions and policies of Congress and the British, but also of the inherent contradictions in Jinnah's own position. The 1946 Cabinet Mission plan represented the last serious attempt to reconcile the notion of Pakistan as territory (with direct moral claims on individual citizens) with the notion of Pakistan as a symbolic marker of the larger community's sovereignty over Muslims' embedded communal lives. With its failure, Pakistan's realization as a territorial state became inescapable. And with that the disjuncture between place and territory began to take its violent toll.

Perhaps the most poignant partition accounts came from those who saw the idea as a sort of moral seal on the local world of conflict and cooperation that defined the essence of Muslim culture, only to find that the territorial reality of partition had destroyed the essential cultural meaning of that sense of place. As Barbara Metcalf has written in describing the autobiographical reminiscences of the

⁴⁷ And, one might add, it was only through the vessel of community that one could participate in the timeless models of moral order represented by the experience of the Prophet.

Muslim *hadith* scholar, Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya, Pakistan as a specific place could offer nothing that could compete with the places that had already been sanctified in the Ganges–Jamuna doab by the blessedness (*barakat*) of the community's pious forebears. But the true nightmare of partition for Zakariyya was that Pakistan's territorial reality disrupted that world of 'dense and elaborate interdependencies and reciprocities' that gave moral meaning to such a sense of place. Watching in horror as fleeing parents abandoned their children (saying 'with complete lack of feeling, that if they got to Pakistan safely more children would be born there'), his account stressed his own struggle to maintain 'through honor, respect, kindnesses and obligations,' a moral world that depended on proper relationships with the living and with 'the dead whose *baraka* illumines the Doab.'⁴⁸ This desperate attempt to maintain the linking of place, ancestry, sanctity, and moral order was cast against the backdrop of a fixed partition of territory that had symbolically torn these linkages asunder.

No work of literature encapsulates this more dramatically than Saadat Hasan Manto's Urdu short story, 'Toba Tek Singh', among the best known works of fiction about the events of partition. Manto's story focuses on the exchange of the insane following the partition, when Muslim lunatics were consolidated in Pakistani insane asylums and Hindu and Sikh lunatics were transferred to asylums in India. But Manto's story is fundamentally about the *dislocation* of place. The main character is a Sikh inmate named Bishan Singh, known to all as Toba Tek Singh, after the canal colony market town and tahsil headquarters in Lyallpur District from which he came, a town itself named, as the British gazetteer tells us, 'after a *chaprasi* who turned *faqir* and made a tank there'.⁴⁹ Manto's conflation of Bishan Singh with the place is not accidental; it suggests the central importance of 'locatedness' in defining Bishan Singh's identity and humanity. Humanity lies in the bonds of family and connection that are strongly associated in the story with the particularity of Toba Tek Singh as a place, most notably in the scene in which Bishan Singh is visited by a Muslim friend from Toba Tek Singh, who evokes the

⁴⁸ Barbara Daly Metcalf, 'Women, Rights, Islam,' Lecture to the University of Chicago Humanities Institute, 14 November 1996.

⁴⁹ Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Chenab Colony, 1904* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1907), p. 152.

everyday bonds of local community and attempts to reassure him about the fate of his family. But if Toba Tek Singh stands for the human bonds of local community, this vision of place is repeatedly played off in the story against the division of territory represented by partition. 'Where is Toba Tek Singh?' Bishan Singh asks his fellow inmates. 'Is it in India or Pakistan?' But no one can provide a clear answer: 'Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India at any moment.' The partition of territory, in this telling, becomes the antithesis of place, of community, and ultimately of humanity. The opposition of place and bounded territory is in fact powerfully dramatized at the story's end, when, as he is transferred to India, Toba Tek Singh collapses in the no man's land lying between the partitioned territories of India and Pakistan.⁵⁰

Such tensions shaped the nature of much of the violence marking partition in 1946–47. On one level, of course, this violence, like Jinnah's quest to be 'sole spokesman', had roots in the tensions between everyday division and the search for moral community that had long marked symbolic politics at the local level. The period preceding partition, the years of World War II, was a time of significant economic and social change in northern India, producing new forms of class tension and of elite competition in many areas. Local conflicts for precedence, either in the face of challenges from below or as a product of new claims to status, such as those made by the thousands of newly demobilized soldiers, undoubtedly helped to fuel communal violence, even when (or, sometimes, most particularly when) Muslims, Hindus, or Sikhs competed with each other for status.⁵¹ At the same time, such conflicts were increasingly framed in

⁵⁰ Saadat Hasan Manto, 'Toba Tek Singh,' (trans. by Khalid Hasan) in Mushirul Hasan, ed., *India's Partition: Process, Strategy, Mobilization*, pp. 396–402.

⁵¹ In Bihar, for example, class conflicts during the 1940s had sharpened contestations in the countryside. In part, elites made use of the framework of communal competition to defuse agrarian challenges, even as the rhetoric of communal competition appealed at the same time to old, local status divisions

the postwar period by assertions of moral community tied to nationalism and to the demand for Pakistan. The appeals for mobilization that led to violence in Calcutta in August 1946, for example, suggested how elite leaders sought to mobilize local violence, not simply in the interest of renegotiating status at the local level, but in the interest also of establishing their position in larger debates (often in conflict with rivals *within* the League and *within* the Congress) at the all-India level.⁵²

But what is most noteworthy about the violence that shaped the run-up to partition was its widespread departure in kind from earlier forms of violence—a departure rooted in the disjunction between the framework of place and the attempted redefinition of moral community in territorial terms. The Pakistan demand had raised, at the most fundamental level, the question of the relationship between local community and a larger moral collectivity. Yet once the Pakistan idea was fixed onto a particular piece of territory, the moral meaning of the politics of place was undone. It was not simply that many Hindus and Muslims were left on the wrong sides of the lines that partitioned India's territory. It was rather that local communities had, in a sense, to be symbolically and morally reconstituted (as the relations between individuals and moral symbols were themselves transformed) in order to find a place in the larger territories of which they were now a part. And violence, long an instrument of moral negotiation in the local context, became in many instances the chief instrument by which this process was carried out.

Historical work on the violence of 1946 and 1947 is still too fragmentary to permit clear generalizations on its meaning. But certain patterns are suggestive of the transformations that occurred. From late

based on caste. Vinita Damodaran, 'Bihar in the 1940s: Communities, Riots and the State,' *South Asia*, 18, Special Issue (1995), pp. 169–76.

⁵² For a discussion of the 'Great Calcutta Killing' of August 1946, see Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal*, pp. 161–92. Muslim and Hindu leaders alike used the violence to gain leverage in the all-India debates that had critical implications for the fate of Bengal. Joya Chatterji quotes a local leader stating this directly: 'Suhrawardy organised the riot ruthlessly to show that...[the Muslims] will retain Calcutta. On the Hindu side it was part of the campaign for the partition of Bengal.' Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, p. 232. There is little doubt that a key part of the audience for the riot was in New Delhi.

1946 there is evidence that violence was often aimed not at renegotiating status and power within the symbolic framework of a local order, but rather at ‘cleansing’ the local community to reground it symbolically in the territorial frameworks promised by partition. This is suggested, for example, in accounts of much of the violence in Noakhali/Tippura in Bengal in October 1946 when large-scale attempts were made both to force Hindu conversions to Islam, and to drive Hindus from the district. What is noteworthy is that these had a strongly organized character, and were conducted in many ways like a campaign to take control of territory.⁵³ Similar elements characterized the violence against Muslims in October 1946 in Bihar.

Such patterns were clearest, however, in the violence that swept the Punjab, beginning in March 1947 after the resignation of the inter-communal, Unionist-led Khizr Hyat Khan Tiwana ministry, but reaching its horrific pinnacle in August 1947 at the time of partition.

As Swarna Aiyar has noted, much of this violence was carried out with ‘systematic organisation’ and a ‘high degree of planning.’ ‘The violence at this time was not so much a matter of “crowds” or “collective action”,’ as it was of ‘campaigns conducted in a military style.’ A prominent reason for this, Aiyar argues, was the ‘highly militarised nature’ of Punjabi society, the result of decades of extremely heavy army recruiting.⁵⁴ But the patterns of violence were shaped by more than the simple presence of a large pool of demobilized soldiers in the Punjab. If we assume that the organized bands of Muslims and Sikhs that perpetrated a major part of the slaughter operated with some sense of legitimacy, then their wielding of violence (itself a sign, after all, of state authority⁵⁵) can perhaps be read as an attempt, through violence, to lay moral claim to the new territories carved out by partition.

Purificatory violence in a sense symbolically sealed the relationship between territory and a new vision of moral community that was promised by the partition decision. The widespread rape and

⁵³ Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal*, pp. 192–203.

⁵⁴ Swarna Aiyar, ‘“August Anarchy”: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947,’ *South Asia*, vol. 18, Special Issue (1995), pp. 25, 27.

⁵⁵ Aiyar notes that many of the demobilized soldiers among the rioters even continued to wear their military uniforms. Aiyar, ‘August Anarchy’, pp. 32–33.

abduction of women may also have had roots, at least in part, in this phenomenon. As Andrew Major observes in describing this violence, 'in situations of civil war, where nearly every man is a soldier fighting for his homeland, women can come to be seen as "territory" to be "occupied".'⁵⁶ Forms of violence against women were of course too varied and awful to be easily categorized, particularly since, as Urvashi Butalia notes, women were often viewed as repositories of the essential culture and honor of the community.⁵⁷ But what is noteworthy of the partition violence was that it focused not just on the humiliation of women as a sign of domination over another community, but on murder, abduction, conversion, and forced migration as signs of the moral appropriation and purification of territory for incorporation into a new state.

This is not to deny, of course, the many continuities between the partition violence and the history of local 'public arena' competition, in which symbolic religious idioms provided the framework for the sometimes violent negotiation of status.⁵⁸ Nor is it to suggest that the patterns of violence associated with partition were identical across northern India. The scale of violence at the time of partition in Punjab far surpassed that experienced elsewhere. Whatever the distinctive forces shaping this violence (such as the presence of numerous exsoldiers, or the distinctive position of the Sikhs), one could also argue that the dislocation of place prompted by territorial partition was

⁵⁶ Major, 'The Chief Sufferers,' p. 60.

⁵⁷ Butalia, 'Community, State and Gender,' p. WS-16.

⁵⁸ One continuity lay in the power of 'riot time' to shape, in Turnerian terms, a direct identification between the individual and a larger moral community, transcending the sociology of local structure. The local forms of 'communitas' often associated with communal riots (which arose precisely because one's very survival in a riot hinged not on any narrow sociological attributes but on identification with a large religious category) were in some respects activated across large areas. See Sudhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). As Swarna Aiyar notes, in 1947 one can use the categories 'Hindu', 'Sikh', and 'Muslim' in describing the partition violence, 'not because intra-community divisions did not exist, but because in moments of violence during the course of the partition massacres each community perceived itself and was perceived by others as being homogenous.' Aiyar, 'August Anarchy,' p. 17.

far more intense in Punjab than elsewhere for reasons relating to the role of regional identity in mediating (or failing to mediate) between the moral politics of territorial partition and local structures of power and community.

Punjab witnessed in 1947 the almost complete collapse of a mediatory political framework previously linking local communities culturally to a sense of regional collectivity. If there was a provincial ‘party of the soil’ in the Punjab before partition, grounding local communities and their leaders in a provincial vision of territorial collectivity, it was the Unionist Party. Openly ‘Punjabi’ in its cultural (if not linguistic) orientation, the Unionist Party had also seen itself as the provincial protector of local and ‘tribal’ networks of identity and influence. But the Unionist Party—and the principles it stood for—were anathematized by the Muslim League in the mid-1940s, and Punjabi identity (including the regional ‘tribal’ and *biradari* associations that helped to produce it) discredited as yet another form of amoral particularism.⁵⁹ Defeated by the League in the 1946 elections, the Unionist Party’s collapse in early 1947 (after a brief period of coalition rule) marked *directly* the start of partition-era violence in the province. Unmediated by regional identity (that might have defined a moral frame within which Muslims and Sikhs could have renegotiated their positions), the symbolic reconstitution of the bonds between local hierarchies and new territorial identities in the Punjab took particularly violent form.

In Bengal, on the other hand, the situation in 1947 was somewhat different. The territorial partition of Bengal also implied, of course, a moral reconstitution of the relationship between territory and community, with all the potential for violence that that implied. But facing no adversary such as the Unionists in 1946, the Muslim League in Bengal did not define itself in cultural opposition to the politics of regional identity in quite the same way as in Punjab. In the years after 1943 the Bengal Muslim League had absorbed not only the social base, but also much of the ideological orientation of the old Krishak Proja Party. The concept of Pakistan as an overarching moral and national community was thus far more readily linked in Bengal to a simultaneous recognition of regional identity as an ongoing frame for the definition of local communities and the particularities of place.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 2.

This was a frame closely associated also with the interests of the Bengali agricultural community.⁶⁰ These associations probably shaped the more limited scale of violence in 1947. To what degree they were a product primarily of distinctive structures of Bengali provincial party politics, and to what degree a product of cultural influences that had, in Bengal far more than Punjab, historically linked an image of Islamic moral community to the soil, is an open question. A close comparative study of the popular rhetoric of the Muslim League in Punjab and Bengal, and of the popular meanings attached to Pakistan, might help to elucidate this.⁶¹

But whatever the regional differences between Punjab and Bengal in patterns of violence, there were commonalities of form that also marked much of the partition-era violence all across north India. If less dramatic than Punjab's violence in August 1947, Bengal's violence during the partition era was also unprecedented. And in both Punjab and Bengal, as in many other parts of north India as well, the psychological impact of the violence associated with partition was profound.

⁶⁰ See Harun-or-Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh: Bengal Muslim League and Muslim Politics, 1936–1947* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1987), p. 344, and Taj ul-Islam Hashmi, *Pakistan as a Peasant Utopia: The Communalization of Class Politics in East Bengal, 1920–47* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992). Harun-or-Rashid argues, by implication, that the populist economic orientation of the Bengal Muslim League, under the influence of Abul Hashem in the 1940s, was linked to the assertion of a distinctive Bengali agricultural identity. The slogan '*dal-bhat*' called forth an image of well-being linked to productive rice agriculture, and also, as some authors have argued, to a distinctively Bengali Muslim identity linked to the soil. For historical and anthropological background on this, see Eaton 1993 and Thorp 1978. This might be contrasted with Punjab, where the provincial Muslim League also offered an increasingly progressive and pro-peasant economic programme in the mid-1940s, but where this program (which was offered in opposition to the pro-agriculturist, if largely landlord-led, Unionist Party) had far less resonance with a distinctively Punjabi agricultural identity.

⁶¹ It would be interesting, for example, to know whether the term *desh* was used by the Bengali Muslim League in 1946 and 1947 in its evocation of Pakistan as a nation. In Bengali, as John Thorp has noted, it is a term redolent simultaneously of local identity, regional identity, and territorial nationhood. John P. Thorp, *Power among the Farmers of Daripalla: A Bangladesh Village Study* (Dacca: Caritas Bangladesh, 1978), p. 78.

Indeed, if the violence of 1947 was in many areas a marker of the collapse of the connection between moral order and place that had defined Muslim politics in the years leading to the Pakistan demand, partition-era violence also represented a critical instrument through which the territorial transformation of the meaning of Pakistan was impressed onto popular consciousness. The very horror of the violence of 1946–47 demonstrated graphically that the connection between religious community and fixed territorial boundaries *mattered*.⁶² Nothing dramatized the connection between individual Muslim identity and the new Pakistan state more clearly than the connections established in these years between boundaries and physical survival. Just as particularly severe communal riots had sometimes led to increasing residential segregation in ‘mini-Pakistans’ in the 1930s, the severity of the violence in 1946–47 burned into popular consciousness the importance of boundaries mapped on the land.

Though the symbolic meanings attached to the new boundaries no doubt varied from region to region, the potential symbolic power of these new boundaries—in the Punjab at least—was suggested by the recollections of one Muslim refugee from Jullundur district in eastern Punjab about her feelings on reaching the Pakistan border. After witnessing the murders of many members of her family, the connection of flag, territory, and Muslim identity took on a meaning that they could not possibly have had previously:

At last, somehow or other, after crossing the sea of fire and blood, we stopped on the lovely land of Pakistan. The slogans ‘Long live Pakistan’, ‘Long live Islam’, echoed from every corner. . . . I had lost everything, forty people of our (extended) family were martyred, but the happiness I found when I saw the Pakistani flag flying at the Pakistan border, is still living in every cell of my body.

Such recollections, recorded many years after the fact, may themselves have been shaped to fit the new meanings appropriate to Pakistan as a new, territorial nation-state. But they nevertheless

⁶² This was of course more dramatically the case in Punjab, but that it was true in Bengal as well is suggested by Suranjan Das’s observation that the idea of territorial partition only began to be taken seriously in Bengal after the violence of August 1946 in Calcutta and of October 1946 in Noakhali/Tippera. Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal*, p. 213.

suggest also the critical role of violence and migration in this transformative process.⁶³

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No historian, of course, can ever capture all the personal meanings attached to a cataclysm such as the partition of India in 1947. But to admit this is not to deny the importance of the attempt to construct a historical narrative that can put the event in a longer historical context. Caught in the violence of 1947, many viewed the partition almost as a calamity of nature. But an examination of the events of partition in fact points us toward the critical ways that the structures of high politics and of everyday life in India were intimately related. The tensions between India's diversity and divisions on the one hand, and the search for moral unity on the other, shaped the dynamics of the demand for Pakistan and the movement toward partition. Whatever the role of the colonial state in fixing and defining communities, the construction of community in India had long hinged on processes that simultaneously constructed both particularistic identities and participation in larger moral communities. These processes had played out repeatedly at the local and regional levels in India. With the transformations of 19th and 20th-century politics, they shaped also the politics of the public realm in India, where the demand for Pakistan was hatched and debated. Yet, it was as a territorial nation-state that the idea reached fruition, a result that suggested the power of global processes in Indian politics. With all its violence, partition dramatized, ironically, both the tenuousness and, ultimately, the power of the idea of the territorial nation-state in South Asia.

Though historians can argue whether it was Nehru or Jinnah who insisted, finally, on the territorial resolution of the Pakistan demand, it is important that for *both* India and Pakistan, it was partition, far more than independence from Britain, that irrevocably fixed the territorial definition of the nation-state as the colonial era ended. Territoriality implied for both Nehru and Jinnah a particular notion of citizenship, rooted not in embedded community, but in the relation of the individual to the state, a concept that Jinnah emphasized strongly immediately before partition in speaking to the Pakistan Constituent

⁶³ Quoted in Talbot, *Freedom's Cry*, p. 200.

Assembly. Appealing directly to the model of England, Jinnah declared that Pakistan should be a state in which everyone, 'no matter to what community he belongs, . . . no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations'⁶⁴ As an ideal, this, of course, implied also a distinctive relationship of the state to the public realm. As an arena of political and cultural contestation among citizens, the public realm was by definition bounded by the territorial contours of the nation-state itself. In the case of Pakistan, the state itself defined symbolically the clearly Muslim character of this public realm. But it remained, theoretically, an arena in which equal citizens could engage in open political and cultural debate, redefining their own particularistic class, interest-based, and cultural identities, even as they redefined *by the same process* the culture of the nation. 'The idea was that we should have a State in which we could live and breathe as free men,' Jinnah declared, 'and which we could develop according to our own lights and culture and where principles of Islamic justice could find free play.'⁶⁵

But, as the Pakistan movement had itself illustrated, the practical ambiguities in the new definition of the nation-state were many. While the violence of 1947 had given powerful meaning to the territorial Pakistan state as a symbol of moral community, the historical backdrop to partition suggested the ambiguities in the process. Whatever the disruptions accompanying partition, those dense networks of interrelationships that defined the particularities of place continued to be the vessels through which most Indians and Pakistanis alike understood the meaning of participation in larger moral communities. It is perhaps in this context that we can interpret the efforts of the Indian and Pakistani states to cope with the violent

⁶⁴ Jinnah held up the history of England as an international model of the evolutionary transcendence of religious sectarianism in the name of equal citizenship in the nation. 'Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the state.' Jamil-ud-din Ahmad, ed., *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1947). pp. 399–405.

⁶⁵ Ahmad, ed., *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, p. 415.

disruptions of partition by symbolically reemphasizing, in their policies toward the recovery of abducted women for example, the morality of patriarchal and familial authority. In stressing the gendering of authority, the new nation-states defined their own claims to moral authority in a language that carried powerful resonance in the competition for status and honour at the most local level.⁶⁶ At the same time, early literature about the partition experience often sought to portray the disruptions surrounding partition as the antithesis of an 'authentic' world of community rooted in the reciprocities of local life—a world whose idealized social harmony could be reclaimed through memory as a foundation for the cultures of new nation-states.⁶⁷

But most critical to the histories of the new nation-states was the reconstitution of the public realm as an arena *both* for the cultural production of the individual citizen and for competition among

⁶⁶ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*. The emphasis on gender of course also created tension in the meaning of individual citizenship. As Ayesha Jalal has argued with respect to Pakistan, attitudes toward the 'recovery' of women after partition were also contradictory. Though state support for the rehabilitation of abducted women symbolized the state's defining commitment to Islamic morality in terms linked to the authority of the family, it also highlighted the failure of the effective exercise of family control over women at partition, thus potentially calling into question the principles of gender hierarchy on which authority rested. The Pakistan state, she argues, was in fact less forthcoming in supporting 'recovery' than that in India. Jalal, 'The Convenience of Subsistence,' pp. 87–88.

⁶⁷ A good example of such literature is Khushwant Singh's novel, *Train to Pakistan*, which presents a pre-partition world of local social harmony (if not of communal equality), in which the meaning of religious community is intimately tied to local life. Partition is portrayed as a product of outside influences that disrupt this seemingly more authentic Indian world. For an analysis of the ways that partition literature in India often lyrically invoked such social harmony, largely in order to define a conservative, while still 'modern', vision of the Indian nation, see Susie Tharu, 'Rendering Account of the Nation: Partition Narratives and Other Genres of the Passive Revolution,' *The Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 16 (1994), pp. 69–91. For the politics of this nostalgia in partition memories, see also Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Remembered Villages: Representations of Hindu-Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition,' *South Asia*, vol. 18, Special Issue (1995), pp. 109–29.

particularisms. Though the complexities of Pakistan's history since 1947 preclude easy generalizations, one can see in Pakistan's history the playing out of many of the contradictions embodied in the territorial transformation of the Pakistan demand. While Pakistan had stood during the 1940s as a symbol of moral order, transcending the divisions among Muslims, the Pakistan state that emerged in 1947 generally saw its task not as one of integrating diversity, but rather one of imprinting its authority onto a *new* and *intractable* territory. The elites who dominated the new state came quickly to mistrust the particularisms of Pakistani society as a threat to the state's own moral sovereignty. The public realm of print and public action was in fact a limited one in much of Pakistan, and the *sharif* elites who migrated questioned the local and regional forms of moral community that were enacted in much of Bengal and the Indus Basin.⁶⁸ Punjabi urban elites generally mirrored these attitudes in their view of Pakistan's 'illiterate' rural Muslim majority. Additionally, landlords in Sind and Punjab had little interest in expanding a public realm that might threaten their own local power. Linked together, these elites set the new state's course.⁶⁹ Instead of defining a framework of local and regional arenas for local contestation linked to the framework of the nation, they repeatedly sought to limit the operation of such arenas, seeking legitimization independently of their connections to Pakistani society, either by relying on the military, with its external sources of support and sometime 'developmentalist' ideology, or by appealing to the authority of the Islamic textual tradition. While the Pakistan state defined symbolically the moral community of the Pakistan nation, it thus tended to do so not in the interest of giving moral grounding to an

⁶⁸ Muhammad Waseem, 'Electoral Democracy in Pakistan,' paper presented to American Institute of Pakistan Studies conference, 'Pakistan: Fifty Years as a Nation,' Winston Salem, North Carolina, 28 August–1 September 1997.

⁶⁹ The importance of the provincial partitions of Punjab and Bengal should also be noted here, for these, by disrupting the structures by which local power had been integrated into provincial politics, seriously undercut the possibility of the emergence of provincial realms that simultaneously expressed distinct provincial identities and identification with Pakistan. This seriously undermined the ability of provincial elites to mobilize provincial identities and at the same time to exert legitimate influence in Pakistan's politics.

expanding public realm, but rather in shaping the state as an *alternative* to that realm.

In the wake of partition, such contradictions were less immediately evident in India. In Nehru's India, far more than in Pakistan, a commitment to the material betterment of society and to 'development' defined the theoretical nexus linking the state and the individual citizen. At the same time, the processes of electoral democracy, long attenuated in Pakistan, defined a political framework in which the particularities of local status and precedence were expressed within a structural framework linked directly to the policy of the 'developmental' state. Drawing confidence from the structure of its own patronage organization, the Congress supported the emergence of a public realm in which local and regional arenas of cultural contestation served at the same time to define particularities of cultural identity and to shape a sense of national purpose. The linguistic reorganization of the states, a sharp contrast to policy in Pakistan, suggested this clearly.

But the moral definition of the public realm nevertheless remained in India also a matter of contestation. Direct attempts by the state to reconcile the moral power of particularistic forms of community with the operation of individual citizenship were not without serious contradictions.⁷⁰ Faced with increasing challenges in the 1970s and 1980s to the state's Nehruvian 'development' ideology, the public realm was marked by increasing resort in the 1980s and 1990s to the competitive language of moral self-definition. Hindu nationalists attempted to morally redefine the public realm itself as a site, independent of the state, which could transcend particularism and express symbolically a moral collectivity. Widespread communal

⁷⁰ Partha Chatterjee has charted the importance of these contradictions in shaping India's ideology of planning and development. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 200–19. One aspect of this has been the state's policy of job reservations and special treatment in matters of personal law for legal categories of protected individuals (such as scheduled castes, OBCs, and Muslims). This policy's legalistic form (operating on the individual as the locus of identity) aimed to reconcile individual citizenship with particularistic identities. But it has nevertheless sparked heated debate on the state's ability to transcend particularism in the name of an ideology of territorial citizenship.

violence in the 1980s and 1990s suggested the powerful connections between this vision of the public realm and ongoing local negotiations for status and power, rooted in the particularities of place. How much this movement owed to the history of partition itself at the nationstate's founding moment is an open question. But, as in the time of the Pakistan movement, Hindu nationalism has been shaped by deep and ongoing fears of social instability and internal division. 'Identity,' Sudhir Kakar notes, 'is not an achievement but a process constantly threatened with rupture by forces from within and without.'⁷¹ Fear of division has been compounded by the global reach of the realm of Indian cultural contestation. And in the public realm the appeal to the language of moral unity has itself provoked, as it did during the Pakistan movement, its own division and controversy.

The tension between the operation of a wide range of particularistic identities and the appeal to a larger moral unity has thus nowhere been fully resolved by partition. But the grounding of partition in a longer narrative context is critical to the telling of this ongoing story.

Despite the power of the territorial nation-state in both India and Pakistan, there are no 'national' communities in South Asia, 'imagined' or otherwise, that do not continue to feed both on the reinforcing relationships between particularistic identities and the moral order of the whole, and on the tensions between them. These continue to be played out at the intersection of high politics and everyday life. If partition is not to be viewed as the end of South Asia's history, after which only the histories of separate nation-states have mattered, then historians must continue the search for a narrative of partition that defines it not just as a product of a deal between the Congress, the British, and the Muslim League, but as a key moment in a much longer and ongoing history linking the state and the arenas of everyday conflict.

⁷¹ Kakar, *The Colors of Violence*, p. 158.